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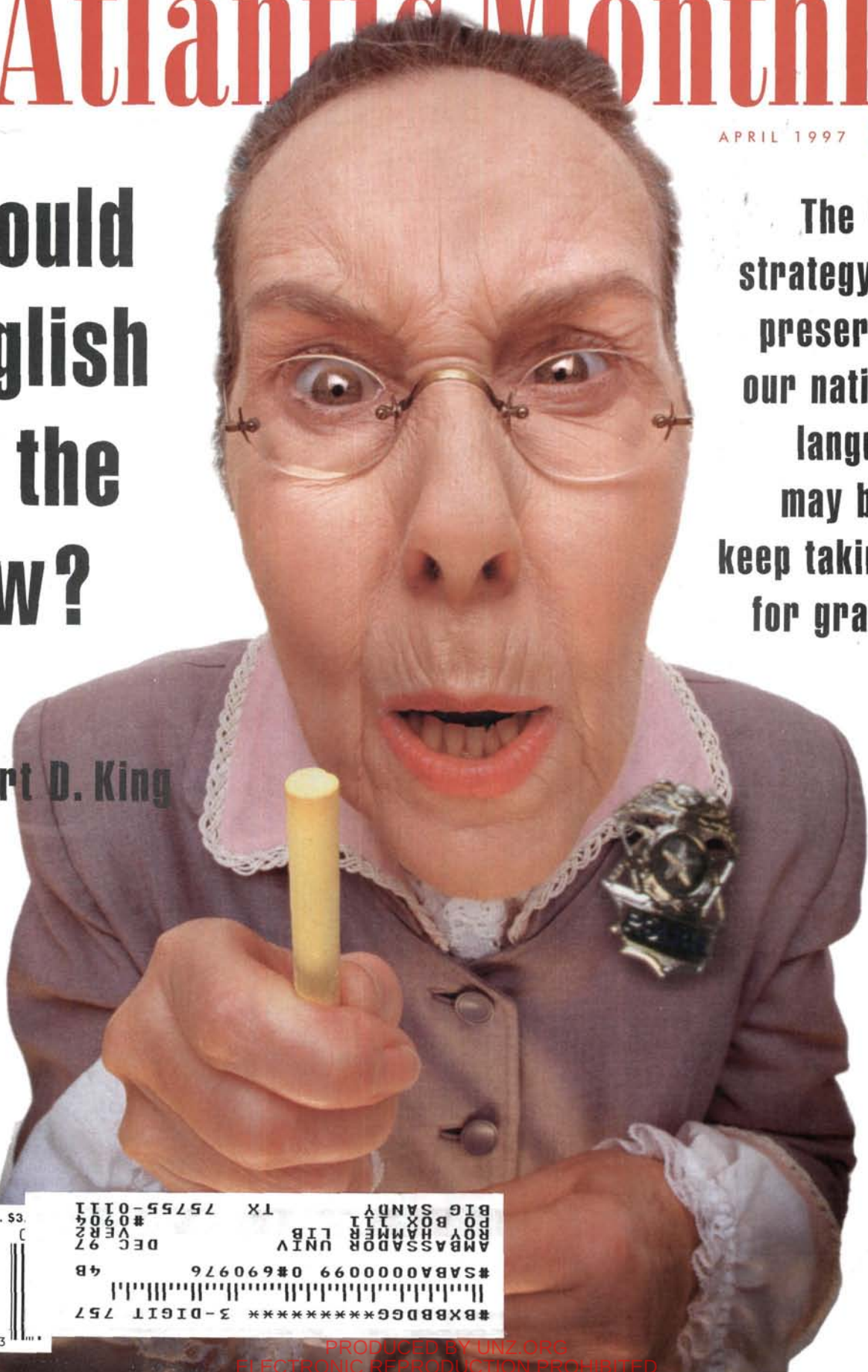
The Atlantic Monthly

APRIL 1997

Should English Be the Law?

by
Robert D. King

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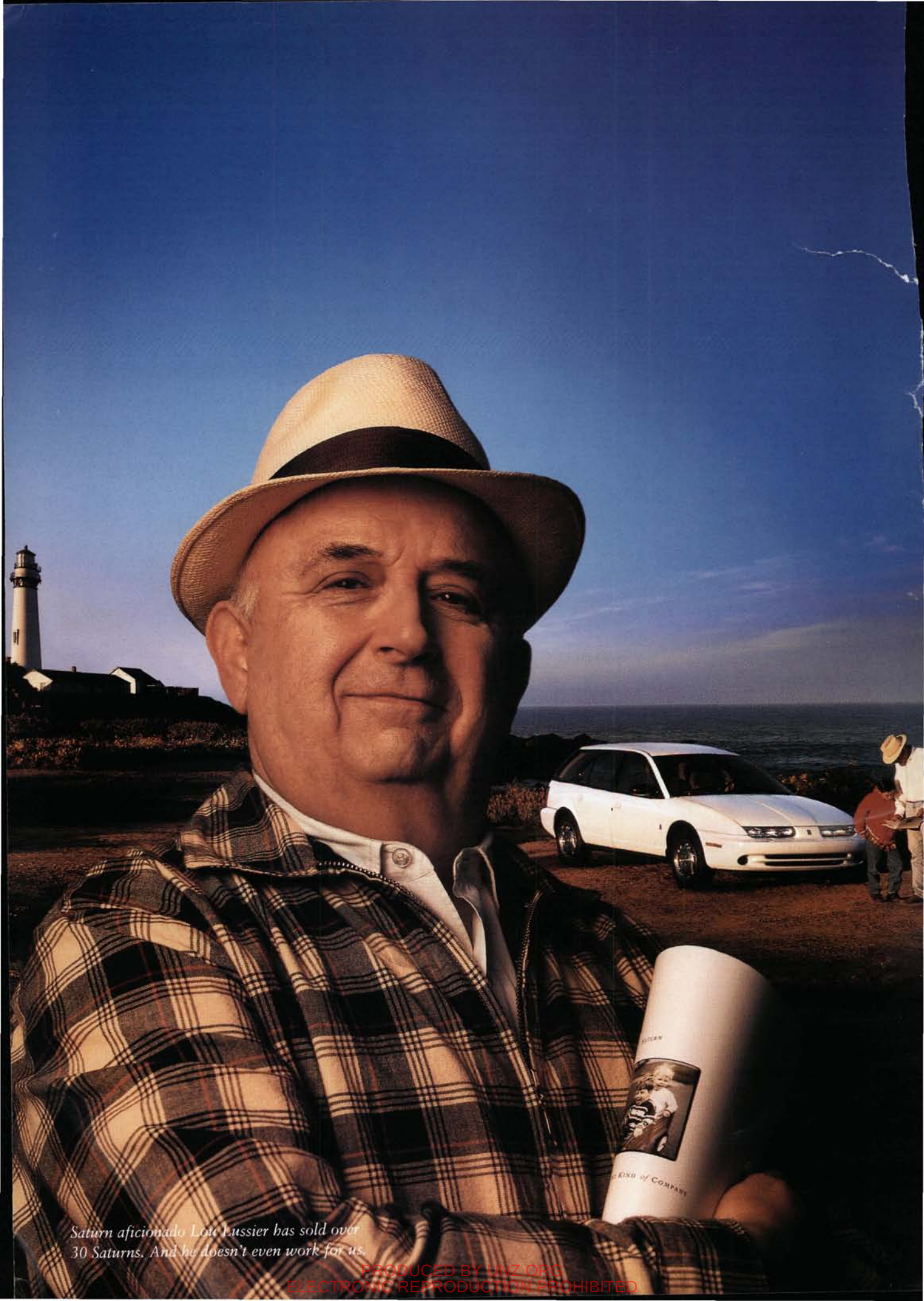


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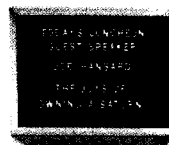
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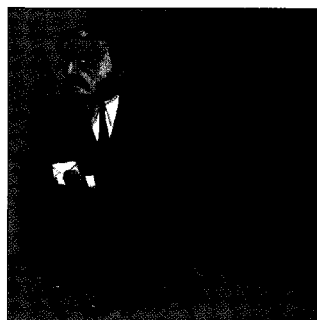
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FEW travelers to Russia these days are likely to conclude—as Jeffrey Tayler, the author of “This Side of Ultima Thule,” in this issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*, told us he has—that Russia, with all its troubles, is “the place I want to be, my *rokovaya strana*, or fated country.” Even fewer would be likely to have an epiphany of that sort while stranded in a truck in the nether reaches of Siberia, battling temperatures of -40° in a blizzard-induced whiteout. And fewer still would then be likely—if they had somehow managed to survive that predicament and had slogged on to complete a solo overland voyage from Russia’s eastern coast through Siberia and into Poland—to decide to escape the cold by making a sweltering 1,100-mile chug up the Congo River on a cargo barge. But such is the manner in which Tayler has recently spent his time. Readers of *The Atlantic* may remember Tayler’s account of his Congo voyage, “Vessel of Last Resort” (September, 1996), as an experience they certainly will *not* try to reproduce. They may feel the same way about the adventures recounted in “This Side of Ultima Thule.”

Since he “defected,” in 1987, from the Ph.D. program in Russian and East European History at the University of Vir-

ginia, Tayler has indulged an apparently insatiable appetite for extreme travel. He has managed this in various capacities: as a Peace Corps volunteer in Morocco, as an interpreter in northern Iraq for National Public Radio during the Gulf War, as one of the first Peace Corps staff members in Uzbekistan, as a freelance writer and photographer, and, most recently, as the Moscow representative for an American company providing physical-protection services (that is to say, bodyguards) to foreign companies operating in Russia. Tayler, whose life has been intertwined with Russia for the past fourteen years, speaks Russian with a fluency that allows him, he says, to pass for “an educated Ukrainian.” He also speaks excellent Arabic, Turkish, and Greek—and can get by in a number of Romance languages.

After a brief period in the United States, Tayler is once again back in Moscow. “I have left there three times,” he says, “thinking that I would find another place to live and work, but I’ve always ended up returning.” He is already at work for *The Atlantic* on further assignments that will test both his tenacity as a traveler and his abilities as a linguist. —THE EDITORS



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Michael Finkel (“Rough-Terrain Unicycling”) is a contributing editor of *Bicycling* and *Skiing* magazines.

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Jeffrey Tayler (“This Side of Ultima Thule”) is at work on a book about a journey across Russia.



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LETTERS

Running Scared

Anthony King's analysis of the behavior of members of Congress is both interesting and disconcerting ("Running Scared," January *Atlantic*). Short House terms, our primary system, and the cost of political campaigns do indeed give an added sense of vulnerability to representatives and senators, and probably limit the effectiveness of our elected officials. Several of the options discussed, such as longer House terms, limited campaign spending with public funding, and some sort of term limits, would help our representatives to act independently in enacting legislation.

One idea that King didn't include would be to increase the size of the House of Representatives from 435 to 600 or 650. This would be the first increase in more than seventy years and would reduce the average number of constituents per district from about 600,000 to about 420,000. Increasing the number of seats by 40 or 50 percent would probably attract more women and minority candidates, making Congress more truly representative of the population.

Another way to encourage turnover and new thinking would be to institute mandatory retirement at an age between sixty-five and seventy. The vast majority of Americans are forced to retire from management jobs at sixty-two or sixty-five or seventy, so to apply the same criteria to our elected officials doesn't seem unfair—or unwise, for that matter.

George A. Dean
Southport, Conn.

I believe that Anthony King's article about elections in America misses the mark in arguing that Americans need a little more distance from their "governors" than our elections demand. The idea of elected officials who are more responsive to their own ideas of the common good than their constituents' ideas seems as alien to the American experi-

ence as the ideas of nobility and royalty.

The problem is that our system has too little representative democracy, which is the genius with which the United States began. Originally there were town meetings, and local elections for representatives to state legislatures. When the Union was formed, the legislatures sent representatives, called senators, until a constitutional amendment required statewide elections, and smaller districts sent representatives to the House of Representatives. This amendment, and television, have caused much of the overspending on campaigns and have required that candidates for the Senate get constant exposure.

Nicholas Kelne
Montgomery, Ill.

Anthony King's article on the disease of the American political system is accurate, in my opinion. In fact, the people who wrote our Constitution tried to avoid exactly the pitfalls he identified. They did not trust that power concentrated in any body of government would be used to the benefit of the country. For example, they provided for the indirect election of the President with the electoral college. Their intention—since they did not foresee the rise of parties—was that the most respected individuals of the several states would be elected to select our President for us. After parties were formed, the members of Congress nominated each party's candidate for President until the nomination of Andrew Jackson in 1828, when the first convention was held. Similarly, the original Constitution did not provide for the direct election of senators. They were to be elected by state legislators. These approaches would do away with most of the shortcomings stated so clearly in King's article. Only the House of Representatives would represent the people as their agent, as he uses the term.

Rob Ashton
Alexandria, Va.

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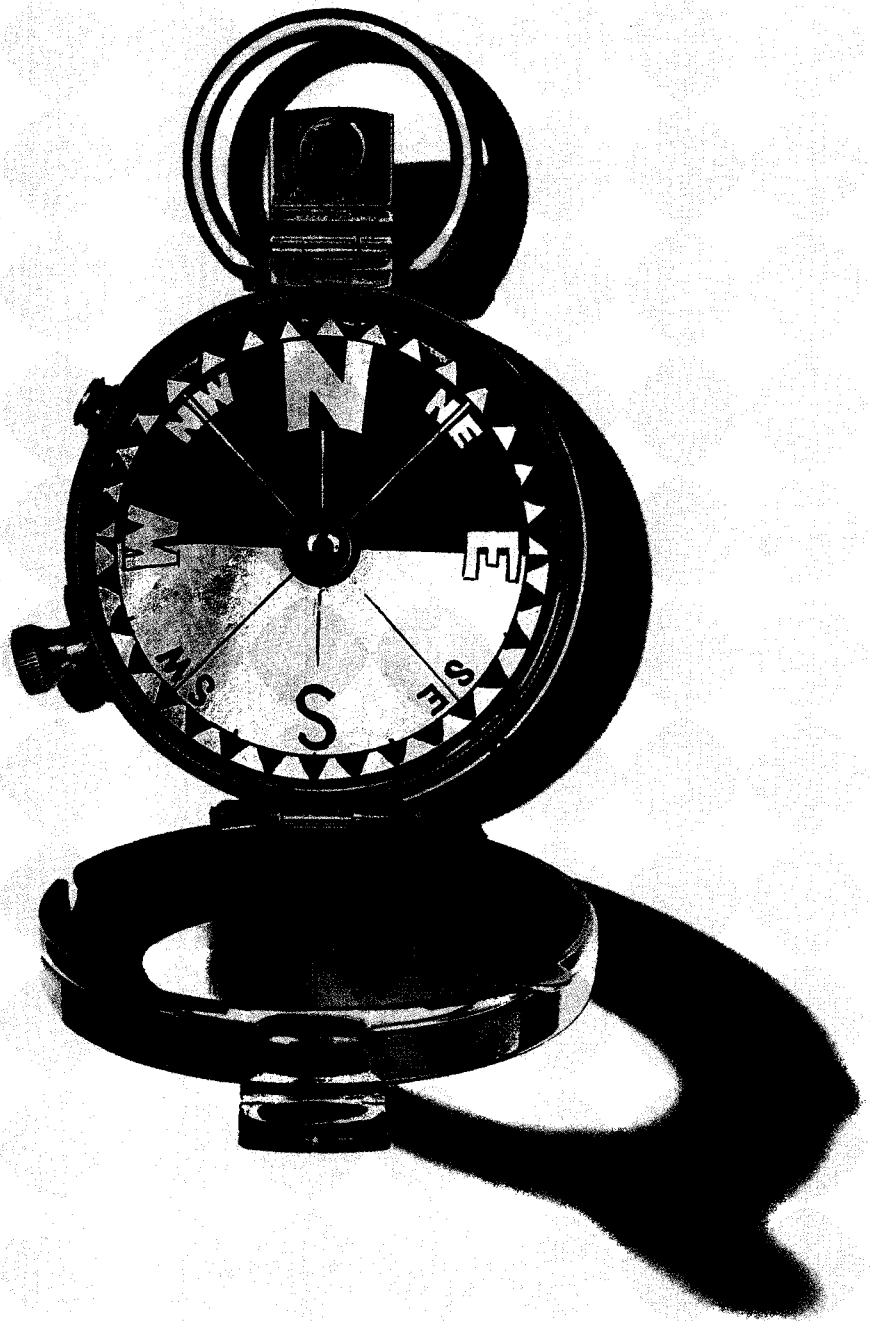
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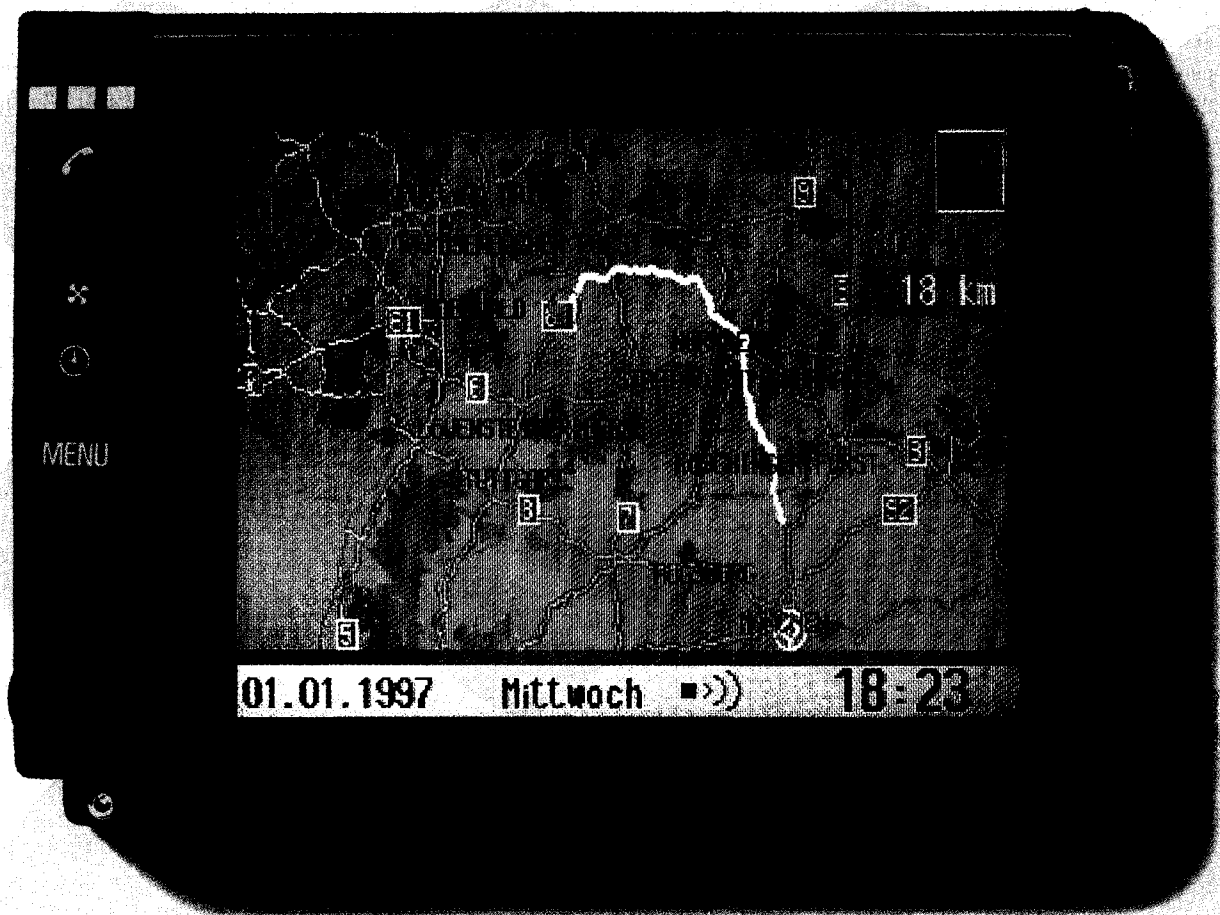


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Anthony King stresses congressmen's fear of not getting re-elected. Yet most of them do get re-elected, by persuasive majorities.

Tertius Chandler
Berkeley, Calif.

Anthony King replies:

I agree with George Dean that it would be a good idea to increase the number of House members to 600 or 650. I made the same suggestion (somewhat to the audience's surprise) in a speech in Washington a couple of years ago. More members and smaller congressional districts would bring more people into politics and would enable them to serve their constituents better. This might also—by tending to make congressional districts more homogeneous—reduce members' dependence on special-interest groups.

I think Nicholas Kelne is wrong to suggest that representative democracy was "the genius with which the United States began." The United States did not begin with one genius; it began with two genii. One was indeed representative (or even direct) democracy; but the other—fundamental to the original, 1787 Constitution—was the Madisonian idea of a system of government that, to be sure, contained a representative element (called, appropriately, the House of Representatives) but at the same time sought to distance the government from insistent and continuous popular pressure. Since 1787, and especially since 1968, the system has been tilted more and more toward direct democracy. I think it should be tilted back. That is Rob Ashton's point. I agree with him.

Tertius Chandler wonders, quite sensibly, about the apparent contradiction between my emphasis on the vulnerability of American elective politicians and the fact that most of them are actually re-elected. It is an important part of my argument—spelled out in my book *Running Scared*—that the contradiction is only apparent.

In the first place, American politicians, precisely because they fear not being re-elected, go to extraordinary lengths to ensure that they are; they campaign endlessly. In the second place, even though their chances of not being re-elected may objectively appear to be small, American politicians have far too

much at stake to operate on the basis of that comfortable assumption. Their political careers are at stake.

No-Frills Jesus

Charlotte Allen, in her excellent article on the state of cutting-edge New Testament scholarship ("The Search for a No-Frills Jesus," December *Atlantic*), quotes Burton L. Mack's comment that "Christianity has had a two-thousand-year run, and it's over." Professor Mack may not know the half of it.

John Kloppenborg's "holy writ" analysis of Q may well be essentially correct in its three-layer picture of that document's evolution, but such a picture should have led to some searching questions on the part of those, like Mack, who so confidently declare that they have excavated a genuine historical Jesus out of Q's subterranean depths.

If the Christian movement, as Mack and others present it, all began in a teaching Jesus, why does that teacher come to us only through such a meager, tortuous route? There is nothing about such a figure in the entire corpus of first-century epistles, which speak only of a transcendent spiritual Christ, with no historical elements. Gospel-like ethical maxims are offered in James, 1 John, 1 Peter, certain Pauline epistles, and so forth, with no attribution to a human Jesus. Paul and others can even ascribe such teachings to God! (Paul's couple of "words of the Lord" have long been recognized as perceived inspirations from heaven.)

The scenario that Burton Mack creates in his book *Who Wrote the New Testament?* is full of very questionable assumptions and conclusions. The theory, now two centuries old, that no human Jesus ever lived and that Christianity began with a belief in an entirely mythical Christ, like all the other savior gods of the day, may soon supplant scholarship's latest avant-garde picture of Christian origins.

Earl Doherty
Ottawa, Ont.

Thanks for making "The Search for a No-Frills Jesus" the cover story of the December *Atlantic*. It's time this "lost" Gospel, so widely accepted among New

Testament scholars, got national exposure outside of academia. However, in such a well-researched article I was dismayed to see Charlotte Allen take an intentional swipe at the "flashy" Jesus Seminar, whose scholars, she says, "vote as if they were at a town meeting." Obviously she did not choose to research the Jesus Seminar before evaluating its procedures—or its work. If she had done so, she would have known that in preparation for a semi-annual meeting Seminar scholars read and are ready to debate the issues explored in some 300 pages of well-documented technical material printed in advance of each meeting. This hardly resembles voting at a town meeting! I hope that the book Allen is writing on New Testament scholarship and the historical Jesus will not repeat such cavalier treatment of the Jesus Seminar, whose eminent New Testament scholars have spent ten years researching the historical Jesus.

Wayne Tinker
Rohnert Park, Calif.

Charlotte Allen mentions, as an objection to the concept of Mark and Q serving as the two literary sources of Matthew and Luke, that "only about 42 percent of the words in Matthew's and Luke's putative Q passages are in fact identical." Since Jesus spoke Aramaic, not Greek (much less King James' English), is it not likely that a collection of his sayings would be in Aramaic? If Matthew and Luke were independently translating from this Aramaic Q, with their differing outlooks, is it not natural that there would be differences in their translations? Luke, practical and socially concerned ("Blessed are the poor"), and Matthew, more philosophical and spiritual ("Blessed are the poor in spirit"), would naturally translate Jesus' sayings in the light of their own concerns and preconceptions.

The fact that Q was in a lesser-known language would also explain its loss over time.

J. McRee Elrod
Unitarian minister, retired
Victoria, B.C.

Charlotte Allen replies:

Earl Doherty contends (and there are scholars who agree with him) that Jesus never existed. However, Jesus' contem-

porary Paul of Tarsus did seem to believe that there really was a Jesus. In his letters to Christian communities in Rome and Philippi—letters that nearly all scholars agree are authentically his—Paul exhorted his readers to imitate Jesus’ actions and attitude, using language indicating his conviction that Jesus was a human being like the letters’ readers.

I think I made it clear that neither the search for a non-Christian Jesus nor the use of Q as the key to that Jesus is a new development. As I pointed out in the article, James M. Robinson and Helmut Koester have been writing about Q since at least the early seventies. What is fairly new is the effort to discern “layers” of composition in Q and to reconstruct the “Q community” and its presumed history. Furthermore, it is only quite recently that books about Q have started rolling off the popular (not just scholarly) presses.

Wayne Tinker says I took “an intentional swipe” at the Jesus Seminar when I commented that its members “vote as if they were at a town meeting.” There are only two criteria for participating in the Jesus Seminar: a Ph.D. from an accredited university and knowledge of ancient Greek. Some Jesus Seminar participants are New Testament specialists, but others (according to a Seminar spokesperson, Char Matejovsky) specialize in the Old Testament, patristics, archaeology, history, anthropology, and other fields less directly related to the Gospels. All Jesus Seminar participants are presumably interested in the subject and have done their reading homework, but they need not have done their own research on the issues on which they vote.

Reverend Elrod makes the interesting point that Q might have been written in Aramaic, not Greek. However, the Q hypothesis arose because of close linguistic similarities in the *Greek* texts of material that the Gospels of Matthew and Luke have in common with each other but not with Mark’s Gospel. For that reason, most scholars who accept the Q hypothesis believe that Q was originally written in Greek, or at the very least was a Greek translation of an Aramaic document. There are many possible reasons why so little Q material is exactly identical in Matthew’s and Luke’s Gospels. Each evangelist might have had a differ-

ent version of Q in front of him, or used Q material for widely divergent literary and theological purposes (as Reverend Elrod and many others suggest), or not used Q at all but used some other source or sources (as nonbelievers in Q insist).

Cuban Socialism

I was appalled by your decision to publish Joy Gordon’s manifesto “Cuba’s Entrepreneurial Socialism” (January *Atlantic*). Gordon’s piece carefully omitted any discussion of American motivation for the embargo beyond sheer meanspiritedness. She ignores the possibility that the embargo represents an extremely gentle response to an unapologetic totalitarian police state that gladly accepted nuclear-tipped missiles to be pointed at our children in 1962, that may very likely have participated in planning the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, that supported its own Vietnam-like invasion of Angola during the 1970s, that cynically opened its prisons and dumped human garbage on the United States in the guise of permitting free emigration, and that most recently took defiant responsibility for the murder of unarmed American citizens. Gordon characterizes the embargo as “meddling in Cuba’s affairs”; some would call it conducting American foreign policy toward an unfriendly government less than a hundred miles from our territory.

I am amused by the logic of Gordon’s argument that the embargo has actually had a salutary effect on Cuba’s economy. If this is so, then why is she demanding that it be ended?

Ray Fadeley
Spokane, Wash.

Couldn’t Joy Gordon, while lauding the rest of the system, mention, at least in passing, that Cuba is a state built on the murder of tens of thousands and the jailing and exiling of hundreds of thousands more and the theft of their wealth; that there are still show trials; that no one may criticize or pray freely; that the leader still calmly explains that the country is so democratic that there is no need ever to allow anyone to vote?

Jonathan Cotter
Santa Monica, Calif.

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Joy Gordon does much to extol the virtues of Cuba's economic progress under the leadership of President Fidel Castro without once mentioning the fact that Cuba maintains one of the worst human-rights records in the Western world, and while also ignoring the fact that only through these abuses does socialism remain intact in Cuba. To suggest that the U.S. economic embargo represents "pettiness" or "harassment and meddling" in the affairs of a country whose citizens are routinely arrested, beaten, and jailed by Castro's police force for peacefully assembling to discuss subjects of a political nature, for speaking openly about reform, or simply for attempting to flee the tyranny in their homeland is to legitimize a regime whose socialist goals have, in and of themselves, wrought financial devastation in Cuba.

The United States reserves every right to establish its own trade policy toward foreign nations, including nations that mandate that its trading partners adhere to certain policies—or seek business elsewhere. President Clinton's recent temporary suspension of that clause in the Helms-Burton legislation which permits U.S. citizens to sue foreign companies that trade in properties seized in Castro's 1959 revolution is only in response to moves by the European Union that are conducive to the restoration of democracy in Cuba. This gesture is a first since the initial establishment of U.S. trade embargoes against Cuba, by President Kennedy in 1962.

To lift these embargoes entirely, in response to international pressure, not only would fuel the Cuban propaganda machine but also would permit Castro full economic freedom to reinforce Cuba's already formidable military and police forces.

Alex R. Knight III
Portsmouth, N.H.

I was pleasantly surprised to see such an enlightening article on the situation in Cuba in a U.S. publication. Your readers might appreciate knowing that the U.S. political situation with respect to Cuba is, if anything, even more bizarre than Joy Gordon points out, and seems to revolve around North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms (a co-sponsor of the Helms-Burton bill, which is a clear imposition of U.S. law extraterritorially for reasons of

nothing more than extremist right-wing ideology).

Defenders of the bill frequently accuse Canada and Mexico in particular of "trafficking in stolen U.S. property" (a direct quote from Marc Thiessen, an aide to Senator Helms, on the CBC Radio program *As it Happens*). What they fail to point out is that the Castro government offered compensation for all appropriated property after the revolution, but the U.S. government quickly passed a law forbidding U.S. companies to accept any such compensation. Two Canadian members of Parliament who claim to be descended from Loyalists from North Carolina have introduced, tongue in cheek, a bill that would keep Senator Helms and his immediate family from traveling to Canada until North Carolina settles its outstanding claims with the estates of Loyalists who left after the American Revolution. (Thiessen claims that Britain settled these debts, which is true, but it was only after North Carolina defaulted.)

Marc A. Schindler
Spruce Grove, Alberta

Joy Gordon replies:

Ray Fadeley and others who hold his view may be surprised to learn that my sources include the *Columbia Journal of World Business*, the CIA's *Worldfact Book*, United Nations and World Bank materials, and research publications by leading American and European economists in the field. Every single piece of information and every figure cited was confirmed independently by *The Atlantic's* very thorough fact-checking process.

In response to Jonathan Cotter's and Alex Knight's comments, I'm inclined to point out the obvious—that the article is not about Cuban politics or the state. It's about Cuba's economic recovery. But I'm more concerned with the objection insofar as it reflects the view commonly held in the United States that Cuba is a one-issue nation, and that nothing can be said about Cuba—about Cuban arts, sports, or economics—if it does not condemn the "evil dictatorship."

We do an injustice to ourselves and to the Cubans when we view Cuban people as though they were either helpless or brainwashed. The Cubans I have come to know over the past seven years are thoughtful and accomplished; they are

steeped in history, and deeply proud of the changes they have brought about since the fall of Batista. They are proud that their children go to school instead of working in the fields, and that their children will grow up to be doctors and engineers, rather than servants.

Those who object to the embargo on ethical grounds are not necessarily pro-Fidel. An economic embargo, like the siege of a city, is intended to harm the general population directly, in order to pressure those in power indirectly. Economic hardship affects the most vulnerable members of society first and worst—the elderly, the sick, and the very young. (Healthy adults are much more likely to survive drastic reductions in food and medicine than infants.) Those who are affected last and least are those in power. The moral objection to the embargo is simply that it is wrong to cause direct physical suffering to millions of people who have nothing at all to do with politics, and that to do so in the name of their human rights is patently hypocritical.

Norman Borlaug

As one who has worked for many years "in the trenches" on African agricultural development, I read Gregg Easterbrook's article "Forgotten Benefactor of Humanity" (January *Atlantic*) with interest and sympathy. However, I feel compelled to correct an error in his article: Cassava is indigenous to Brazil but *not* to Africa; it was brought by the Portuguese to their African colonies and spread from there to other parts of the continent.

This kind of error is typical of well-meaning environmental organizations, which like to imagine that modern agricultural techniques are displacing or disrupting farming systems that are in some sense indigenous or that somehow do not change the environment. The fact is that agriculture *means* changing the environment. There is simply no such thing as agricultural production that does not involve some level of control over the land and water resources on which the production is based. This is as true of so-called extractivist rubber tappers in the Brazilian Amazon as it is of highly mechanized farming in the San Joaquin Valley. The trick is to find some way to produce food and fiber which can be sustained over

long periods without damaging the capacity of the resource base to generate the same level of output in subsequent years.

Some physical laws cannot be avoided. If you take a crop from a piece of land, then you must return the nutrients that you have removed if the land is to retain its productive capacity. The main nutrients are nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium, though others may be important in particular locations. In addition, some aspects of soil structure must be maintained as well. Some of these needs can be met with crop rotation or "green manure," but there are few viable alternatives to the application of conventional fertilizers for others (notably phosphorus, which comes mainly from mineral sources).

A real issue, and one that is particularly important, is the fact that population pressure on much of Africa has yet to reach the levels seen in India and China. Therefore Green Revolution technologies, which are extremely cost-effective in land-scarce areas such as these, simply don't have the same economic appeal in many parts of Africa. Similarly, green manure and other labor-intensive steps

are not practical in situations where labor is the limiting factor. Intensification of production has been shown to occur spontaneously in areas where population pressure becomes an important problem, but it is an open question whether this intensification can be achieved in areas where land is in fact still abundant.

Steven Kyle
*Cornell University
Ithaca, N.Y.*

I strongly agree with Gregg Easterbrook's general conclusion, but he makes a major factual error that casts a shadow on the article. On page 77 he informs his readers that "wheat was [after the Second World War] a foreign substance in India." Wheat has been the staple food grain grown in northwestern India down to and including most of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh for centuries, and probably since the dawn of agriculture.

John H. Foster
*Emeritus Professor,
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, Mass.*

Gregg Easterbrook replies:

Steven Kyle faults me for supposing that traditional farming methods have little impact on the land. But my article discussed precisely that problem, noting that traditional slash-and-burn farming can harm land more than high-yield practices do. And in current usage regarding developing-world issues, the term "indigenous" is commonly understood to mean "preceding the industrial or colonial era." Through the far past people, plants, and animals were transplanted in ways that leave researchers unsure in many cases as to what is ultimately indigenous to where. In the time frame that matters to contemporary debate it seems fair to call cassava indigenous to Africa, since it has been grown there for four centuries.

John Foster asserts that I should not have called wheat a "foreign substance" in post-Second World War India. I urge him to note that my article refers specifically to anti-wheat rioting in Kerala state, not in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, the states he mentions. Having lived in Pakistan, I've eaten my share of the subcontinent's various cereals.

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THE APRIL ALMANAC



Demographics

April may indeed be the "cruelest month," at least with respect to suicide rates. Suicides peak not during the Christmas holidays or the winter as a whole, as one might expect, but during the spring, usually April. Speculation as to why focuses on both biological factors (depression and suicide have been associated with fluctuations in levels of the neurotransmitter serotonin, which may occur as hours of daylight increase) and behavioral factors (those experiencing depression may expect it to lift when spring arrives, and may become even more depressed when it doesn't). A geographic pattern to suicide is also evident: rates in the western mountain states are twice as high as the national average of 12 per 100,000 people. Isolation undoubtedly plays a role; in addition, these are among the states with the greatest proportions of new residents, a fact that bolsters a long-postulated link between mobility, which weakens a person's social supports, and suicide.

Food

April 1: Abalone season begins today in northern California. Heading out into coastal waters will be not only divers, who pry the giant mollusks from underwater rocks, but also marine enforcement officers from the California Department of Fish and Game, which is stepping up efforts to curb poaching. Abalone, a high-priced delicacy whose

taste is often compared to that of calamari, is primarily sold to American restaurants or shipped to Asia. Because the populations of the mollusk are fragile, divers have long been limited to taking four a day. However, abalone's growing popularity has given rise to widespread poaching. By one estimate, nearly 5,000 abalone are taken illegally each day during prime diving conditions; they bring up to \$40 a pound on the black market.

The Skies

April 1: Comet Hale-Bopp is at perihelion—its closest approach to the Sun during its 4,000-year orbit. The comet will hang high above the western horizon an hour after sunset all month long; however, the waxing Moon will start to interfere with viewing by the end of the second week. **6:** At 2:00 A.M. Daylight Saving Time begins. Set clocks an hour ahead. **22:** Full Moon, also known this month as the Fish, Egg, and Sprouting Grass Moon.



Arts & Letters

The Newseum—the first museum in the United States devoted to the news industry—opens this month in Arlington, Virginia. Funded by the Freedom Forum, a nonprofit organization, the museum will include multimedia presentations (for example, a block-long wall of news videos), interactive exhibits (visitors can create broadcasts or put their pictures on mock front pages), and displays of news-related artifacts (a Sumerian clay tablet, Charles Dickens's pen). An adjacent park contains items from various struggles for freedom—for example, pieces of the Berlin Wall. Although some in the media are enthusiastic about a museum

honoring their trade, others have been less sanguine, characterizing some exhibits as "gimmickry" and the museum as a whole as possible "self-aggrandizement" on the part of the Freedom Forum's chairman, Allen Neuharth (the founder of the newspaper *USA Today*), and questioning whether a museum celebrating the news industry will be able, when appropriate, to take it to task as well.

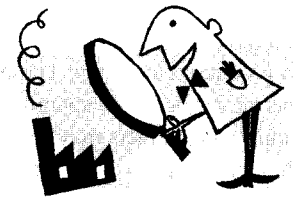


Health & Safety

April 7: Drivers should take extra care today, because car accidents are, on average, 7 percent likelier on the Monday just after the start of Daylight Saving Time—when most people lose an hour of sleep as the result of turning clocks ahead—than on the preceding and subsequent Mondays. (Accidental deaths of all sorts rise, typically by 6 percent, for several days after the time change.) This phenomenon, documented last year by a researcher at the University of British Columbia, has been attributed to an increase in "microsleeps," or lapses of attention, during daily activities. Correspondingly, the number of car accidents falls by 7 percent on the Monday in October following the end of Daylight Saving Time, when clocks are turned back.

Government

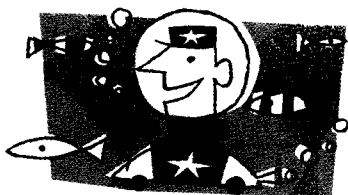
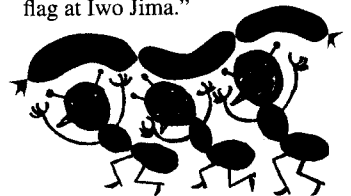
April 29: The Chemical Weapons Convention takes effect in countries where it has been ratified. The treaty obliges those countries to eliminate all chemical weapons and weapons facilities within 10 years; it is the first treaty ever to eliminate an entire class of weapons. The treaty contains some of the most stringent verification measures ever included in



an arms-control agreement—notably, it allows spot inspections not only of declared chemical-weapons facilities but also of any industrial facility capable of producing weapons. As of this writing, the treaty has not yet been ratified by the two countries with the largest chemical-weapons stockpiles—Russia and the United States. U.S. ratification was derailed last fall by Senate Republicans, concerned that states such as Iran and Syria are not signatories and that the liberal inspection policy could lead to industrial espionage.

25 Years Ago

L. E. Sissman, writing in the April, 1972, issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*: "A creative problem-solving team on the verge of an answer is a stimulating thing to behold and be part of. Each member subjectively makes a contribution. Every other member instantly reacts to this suggestion, but if the group's working right, not in a selfish or egocentric way. . . . Like ants or a bucket brigade or, at the highest level, an ensemble of actors, the group bands together to find the one most logical and productive answer. At moments like this—moments of breakthrough—every member of the group feels a pride in the emerging solution and an exhilaration that can be described only as being off the ground. The group, severally and together, has stood on a frontier, however modest, of human skill or execution, and has raised, so to speak, the flag at Iwo Jima."



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How to Rewrite Economic History

The Boskin Commission's attack on the Consumer Price Index is weak on the merits and scary as policy

THE one duty we owe to history is to rewrite it," Oscar Wilde said. In line with that aphorism, the Advisory Commission to Study the Consumer Price Index, chaired by Michael Boskin, has rewritten the economic history of the past twenty-five years. The Boskin Commission was formed at the behest of the Senate Finance Committee. Last December it released its long-awaited report on the CPI. The commission reported its conclusion that the CPI overstates the rate of cost-of-living inflation by 0.8 to 1.6 percentage points a year; its best estimate was that inflation is overstated by 1.1 percentage points. If cost-of-living inflation has been overstated, then the growth of the economy and real wages has been much higher than previously reported. The commission has thus solved the problem of stagnating wages, which is now revealed to be a mere fiction. Far from experiencing a "silent depression," the commission implicitly claims, American families have never had it so good.

The political implications of this rewriting of history are obviously enormous. The commission's findings are being used as a cloak for an economic agenda that will injure lower- and middle-income households. By "cooking the books" the commission threatens to undermine the dawning consciousness that the U.S. economy is no longer delivering prosperity for huge segments of society. Clearly, its findings need to be substantively examined before being accepted.

Unfortunately, the majority of the American economics profession appears to have uncritically accepted the commission's finding that inflation is overstated; this implicitly makes a mockery of the profession's own intellectual accomplishments. If inflation, wages, and income have all been misstated,

years of research have been conducted using incorrect data. Thus much of this research, which purportedly confirmed the profession's theoretical claims, is no longer valid.

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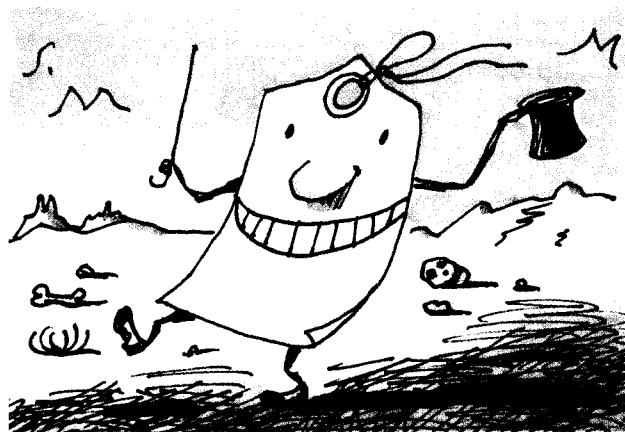
The Boskin Commission cited four reasons for the CPI's mismeasurement of inflation: product-substitution bias, outlet-substitution bias, quality-change bias, and new-product bias.

The CPI measures the cost of a given basket of goods in which the quantity of each good is based on the amount that the average consumer was buying on the date the index was calibrated. Product-substitution bias emerges because over time consumers alter the goods they buy, and consequently the bundle of goods that the CPI is tracking no longer represents consumer spending patterns. The Boskin Commission claims that consumers have been substituting low-inflation goods and that the CPI has been oversampling high-inflation goods.

Outlet-substitution bias arises because consumers have been changing the places where they shop, shifting from high-priced department stores to lower-priced discount stores. But the CPI oversamples department-store purchases and undersamples discount store purchases.

Quality-change bias reflects the fact that products tend to improve in quality over time, and thus consumers are effectively getting more product for their money. The CPI not only may fail to capture this improvement in quality but also may register quality improvements as price increases, since improving quality sometimes adds to cost.

New-product bias arises because new products are only gradually incorporated into the CPI basket of goods. But the prices of new products tend to fall rapidly soon after the products are



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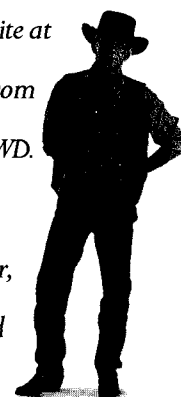
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introduced, and thus the price decline is not captured by the CPI.

The cornerstone of the Boskin Commission's findings is sample-selection bias in the construction of the CPI—that is, the CPI basket of goods oversamples high-inflation goods and undersamples low-inflation goods and goods whose prices are falling. The commission is itself a delicious example of such bias: All its members were on record prior to the establishment of the commission as believing the CPI to be overstated. At the same time, the commission took no evidence from such well-known economists as Janet Norwood, a former head of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and Dean Baker, of the Economic Policy Institute, who believe that the CPI provides a reasonable reading of inflation. In effect, the commission took account of all the evidence of overstatement of inflation by the CPI and downplayed the evidence of potential understatement.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics, which is responsible for maintaining the CPI, has long been aware of the different biases identified by the commission, and it carefully and scrupulously adjusts the CPI to root them out. Whereas the Boskin Commission conducted no new research, the bureau conducts frontier research on the CPI. The government's statistical agencies have a history of producing very fine statistical work. Attacking their statistics damages their credibility and clouds the nation's political and economic understanding.

Contesting the technical details of the commission's arguments, Dean Baker has pointed out that the CPI could possibly understate inflation. For example, the CPI fails to take account of the greater contributions for health-insurance premiums and doctor co-payments that have increasingly been forced on American households. It fails to take account of increased traffic congestion, which raises the cost of commuting.

But quibbling over what is included or excluded misses the real point: the Boskin Commission has fundamentally misunderstood the economic information contained in the CPI.

■ ■ ■

Consumers do alter their buying habits as new products come into being and lifestyles change. However, the most noticeable feature of current trends is the systematic substitution of cheaper products. This substitution is an outcome of the now widely recognized squeeze on ordinary household incomes. For example, suppose your child has just been accepted by Yale University, but you find you are unable to afford the tuition; instead she must attend Erewhon State College. The commission would point to this as an example of product-substitution bias and claim that the CPI is overstating inflation.

Exactly the same argument applies to the issue of outlet-substitution bias. One can also argue that the inferior service customers receive at discount stores represents a loss of quality and thus that discount shopping reduces quality-change bias.

The commission's reading of new-product bias is also indicative of its misunderstanding of the use to which the CPI is put. It is actually a good thing that the CPI does not immediately include new products, such as hand calculators and computers. Such products are often extremely expensive when they

first come out, and beyond the range of ordinary households. These products are widely consumed only after their prices fall. The CPI has been used as a measure of the cost of living for an ordinary household, and as such it should include new products only after they have been widely adopted.

■ ■ ■

Aside from rewriting economic history, restating the CPI to show lower cost-of-living inflation would have profound consequences for American families. Many employment contracts have cost-of-living adjustment clauses that link wages to the CPI inflation rate; a lower rate would lower wage increases. The CPI inflation rate also serves as a benchmark for setting wages for workers who do not have contracts containing automatic COLAS. A lower CPI rate would give employers a reason to lower wage increases for these workers too.

The economic harm to working people would not be restricted to wage cuts. Income-tax brackets and the earned-income tax credit given to low-wage workers are both indexed to the CPI. Lowering the CPI inflation rate would therefore affect income-tax exemptions and push many middle-class families into higher tax brackets. Adopting the Boskin Commission's findings would be tantamount to imposing a tax hike that would particularly affect lower- and middle-income families.

Social Security payments are also indexed to the CPI, so lowering the CPI inflation rate would slow the growth of Social Security income. Social Security is the principal source of income for 66 percent of the elderly and the only source of income for 14 percent. The elderly are large consumers of health care, and costs have gone up faster in this sector than in the rest of the economy. Moreover, the elderly tend not to be consumers of those new products—computers, for example—that have decreased in price and slowed the growth of the CPI. From the standpoint of the elderly, the CPI underweights health-related spending and overweights new products, thereby significantly understating the inflation they experience.

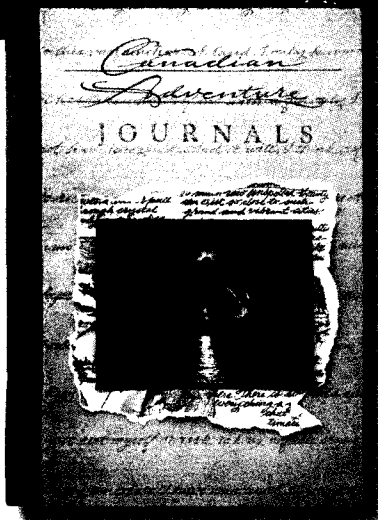
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Given the questionable intellectual foundations of the Boskin Commission's findings, the commission's high standing in Washington requires explanation. Both Democrats and Republicans have been keen to see its recommendations adopted, because they provide a potentially uncontroversial way to achieve deficit reduction. Raising taxes is unpopular, and little discretionary government spending is left to be cut. Restating the CPI as a measure of cost-of-living inflation offers an easy way to lower Social Security payments through reduced COLAS and raise tax revenues through reduced exemptions. The hope is that the CPI can be presented as an apolitical and boring technical issue that voters won't notice.

Revising the CPI would get the Republicans off the hook of deficit reduction, while simultaneously advancing the interests of business. This, however, would occur at the expense of working Americans and the elderly. Revising the CPI would get the Democrats off the same hook, but at the cost of another shameful desertion of the constituencies they claim to represent. ☼

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and withered hopes, which is sometimes
called "the white hell"*

FROM atop the rickety steel bridge over the railroad tracks, I could see Chernyshevsk spread out before me. Pockmarked concrete apartment blocks sat in fields of dun-colored earth studded with rusting fenders, tire rims, and axles. Across the way dark-brown wooden huts brooded behind

larch fences, and past the edge of town a barren steppe extended toward Mongolia. From this steppe's most distant reaches came a majestic wind driving clouds of dust that one minute took the shape of galloping dragons, the next disintegrated into rolling swells as on an angry sea, but ever swept over the

by Jeffrey Tayler

town and into the twilight emptiness that lay beyond. And yet what was *beyond* from here? It seemed that I was standing in the outer reaches of beyond—that Chernyshevsk was lost in it, hunkered down against plangent gales blowing from nowhere to nowhere.

Given that it stretches almost halfway around the Northern Hemisphere, it is odd that Siberia should remain so unacknowledged. Even non-Siberian Russians know relatively little about it, though it makes up more than three quarters of their homeland. Dubbed in prison songs *bely ad* ("the white hell"), Siberia remains for many former Soviets a place of exile, personal knowledge of which they have not cared to acquire. Historically, however, it was once a Klondike of hope, where the fetters of society could be shed and riches hewn out of the frozen taiga.

To gather material for a book, I was traveling from one end of Russia to the other, and thus crossed Siberia—no mean feat, given that much of its territory has no real roads, no rail lines. By way of *zimniki*—tracks negotiable by vehicle only when frozen—I trucked my way more than 1,800 miles west and

Journey's start: Magadan



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south from Magadan, on Russia's eastern coast, through Kolyma and Yakutia until I hit the town of Tynda. From there I caught the train to Chernyshevsk, a blight of a settlement 180 miles north of Mongolia, six time zones east of Moscow, and as close to nowhere as one can get this side of Ultima Thule.

That evening I wanted to find a truck heading for Chita, renowned for its high radiation and ICBM silos ("All our missiles there were pointed at your homeland!" a Russian woman had informed me with a smile), but a clerk in the train station told me that for this "only Solovyov can help you—in the morning." I'd have to spend the night in Chernyshevsk.

I asked the station manager where there was a hotel in town.

"A hotel? You are in *Chernyshevsk!* Why risk it? You can stay right here on the second floor." I paid him 200 rubles (about fifty cents) and went upstairs to the key lady. Why the grave tone, the urgency?

Everything about Siberia defeats attempts at intimate understanding. No one can come to know or even effectively conceive of its 5.3 million square miles of territory (larger than the United States, including Alaska and Hawaii, by more than a million square miles), inhabited by a mere 25 million people. Little else about Siberia lends itself to handy comparisons. The greatest known temperature variations occur in Verkhoyansk, where Soviet meteorologists have recorded both -90° and 98° . About 400 miles to the southeast lies the coldest inhabited place

on the planet—the former Stalinist gulag and mining settlement of Oymyakon, where -95.8° is the official record; under pressure steel shatters like fine French crystal in such gelidity. Elsewhere in Siberia—in Yakutsk, for example—January temperatures can average a balmy -58° . Such temperatures would jell the mercury in almost any thermometer sold in the United States. Siberians recognize them by *shopot zvyozd*, the "whispering of the stars" that occurs when human breath



freezes upon exhalation and drops to the ground with a barely audible tinkling—an ethereal experience.

But Siberia is anything but ethereal. It is perhaps the dreariest, most nullifying place on earth. Stretching from the Ural Mountains to the Pacific Ocean, from China and the deserts of Central Asia almost to the top of the world, its expanses show little variation across their 4,000 miles east to west or nearly 2,000 miles north to south. Siberia is flat, flat, flat—with the exception of low hills, called *sopki*, in its eastern regions, and remote mountains, such as the Suntar Khayata, so far north that few Siberians have ever seen them. Broad rivers—the Ob', the Irtysh, the Yenisey, and the Lena, for example—wend their way

across the tundra toward the Arctic Ocean, but by October they freeze over so thickly that they can be used as truckways until spring. There are huge expanses of taiga, and permafrost covers more

than half the land, reaching deeper than 4,200 feet into the earth in the north. The few native Siberians (Evenks, Yakuts, Tuvins, Buryats, and Khakases, among others), once disparagingly termed *inorodtsy* ("those born of another stock") by the Russians, and *natsmenny* ("national minorities") by the Bol-

Rest stop on a Siberian zimnik

sheviks, have effectively been disenfranchised by their Slavic neighbors-turned-conquerors. The Soviets forced most of them to forsake their traditional nomadic ways for the settled life of reindeer kolkhozes (collective farms) and similar absurdities. Today many simply drink themselves to death on cheap Russian vodka.

In Chernyshevsk, however, not a reindeer or a Khakas was to be seen. An old Russian lady bundled in a sheepskin shuba tottered along the station platform, bleating a ditty about her only ware, a bottle of sour milk. On the dusty street a youth with a bloodied eye lurched about in a funk of booze, surrounded by a circle of taunting urchins who pelted him with stones. Across the lot two drunks, alike in their floppy-eared fur hats and trousers stained with crescents of urine, staggered and swayed in odd harmony amid whirlwinds of dust, as if performing a final pas de deux before the onset of a nuclear winter.

"I'd like a room," I said, presenting my chit from the station manager.

"A room?" the key lady rasped, hoisting herself out of her chair. "We have one common room. You'll get a bed!" She snorted and extended her arm. "Around the corner. No key. Go." Around the corner was only a stench and a bathroom door. I walked back to her cubbyhole and told her I couldn't find it. She got up



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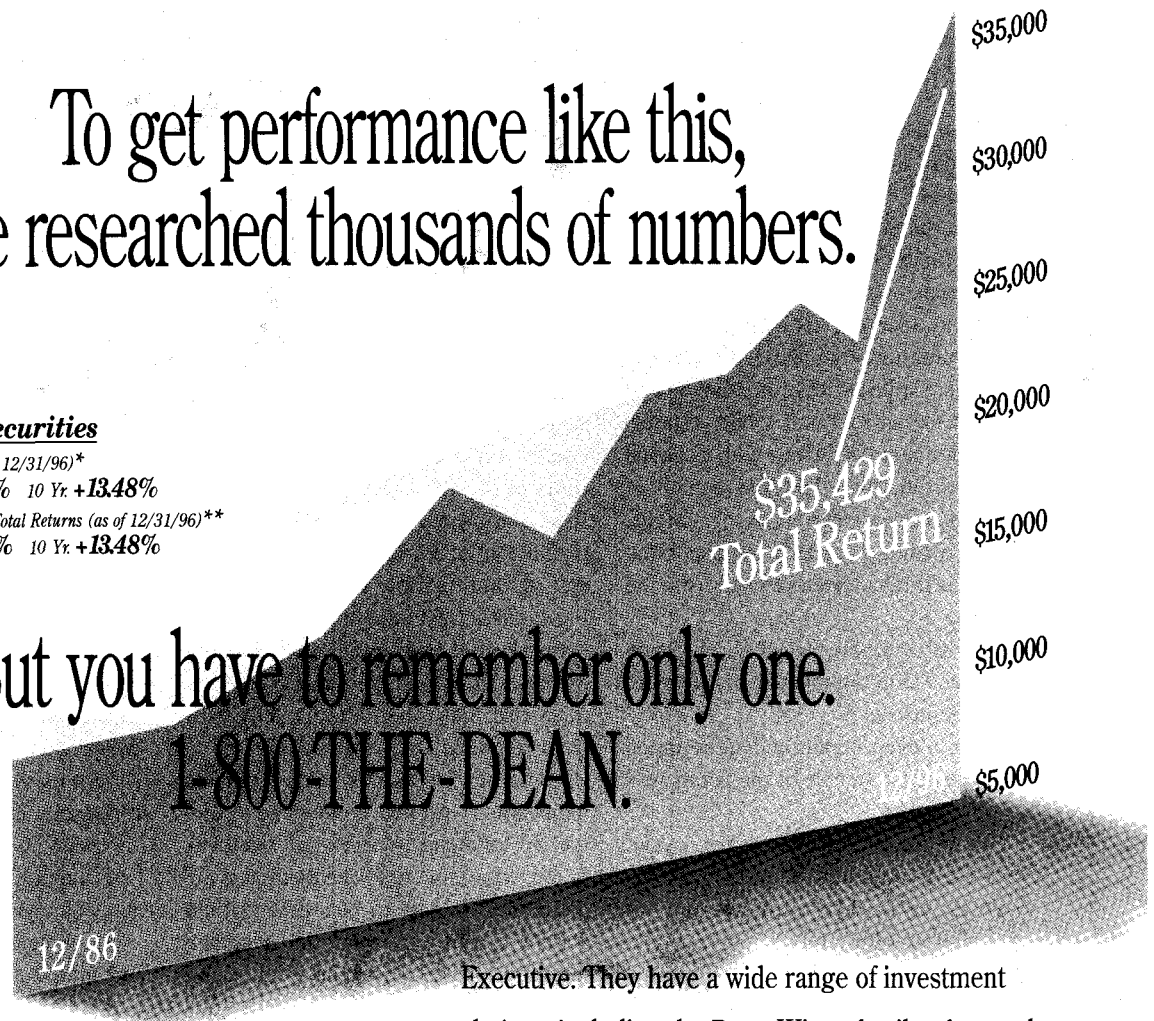
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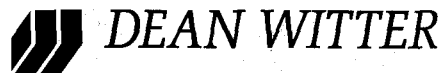
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and pointed a bony finger at the bathroom. "I told you, that's it!"

The stench grew stronger as I approached the door. I opened it. On one bed a man lay snoring face down, his arm hanging over the edge of the mattress, his hand clutching a vodka bottle that lay on the floor. There was a puddle of urine next to the wall. On another bed a man lay face up, his eyes wide open and unblinking. He appeared dead. His pants were soiled with urine. On the bed in front of me reclined a burly-shouldered fat man in his fifties with a shaved head and filthy bare feet, the toenails of which had been eaten away by fungus. He was reading a stained newspaper that looked as if it had been rescued from the garbage.

"*Zdras'tye!* Come on in!" He put down the paper. "Don't mind the boys. They're a little depressed."

I took a deep breath and sidestepped the urine. The stench in the room was rancid, organic.

"We've been out of work for a year. We were gold miners in Yakutsk. Twenty years we worked up there, and we were paid well for it too. But *perestroika* killed our mine."

Lucre drew Russians into Siberia. In 1581 the Cossack chieftain Yermak Timofeyevich led the first campaigns to break through the khanates left over from the Mongol invasions and bring

monds, and timber plots larger than the whole of Europe. This was crucial wealth for a country of limited agricultural potential.

But this bounty lay hidden in a remote and frozen desolation that intimidated even the hardy Russians. Thus it took the Czar's Cossack brigades, composed of freedom-loving outlaws and assorted renegades from civilized society, to build an array of military-mercantile *ostrogi*, or stockade towns, that would open the region to exploitation, chiefly along the strip that became the route of the Trans-Siberian Railway. At first common criminals served their time at hard labor in the *ostrogi*, but others, revolutionaries, soon joined them. For the latter, who included the Decembrists, Lenin, and Stalin, Siberia was a prison land only in the vaguest sense of the word: here they simply led rustic lives removed from the mainstream of Russian life. Isolation was their punishment, and it proved conducive to creativity for many writers and thinkers. Some even came to love Siberia and applied their talents to beautifying their abodes of exile; the gentrified architecture of Irkutsk, "The Pearl of Siberia," is largely the product of the Polish elite banished there after failed nationalist revolts against czarist rule in the nineteenth century.

Siberia's image changed during Soviet times. Realizing that the land's riches could make the USSR an industrial and military behemoth, Lenin and particularly Stalin turned Siberia into a domain of diamonds and death, of gold and perdition. Prisoners, known as *zeki*, who might be non-Bolshevik socialists or well-off peasants or later, during the purges of the 1930s and afterward, virtually anyone—including entire ethnic groups whom Stalin designated as "enemies of the people"—were consigned to bone-breaking labor amid its icy wastes, excavating metals, sawing down forests, even mining uranium without protection and dying from their finds. Eventually the expanses that had once meant freedom to at least some Russians came to signify only exile, the mineral bounty of Siberian earth only hard labor. In the infamous gulags of Kolyma, for example, about half the prisoners died, and those who survived were often left with lifelong debilities.

THE fat man wiggled his toes. An ashen light suffused the room. The windows rattled with the wind.

"Don't be afraid!" he said. "You have my word—I'll personally guarantee your safety. No need even to check your bag. Take that bed by the wall. It's the only free one, actually."

I sat on the free bed and put down my bag. A gurgling sound emerged from the dead man. His arm began to twitch and jerk; his hand groped for the vodka bottle on the table next to him. He missed, and his arm dropped back to the floor. The fat man queried me with a contrived off-handedness that aroused my suspicion.

"So, what have we got in our bag?" he asked. He pointed at my camera bag and jiggled his eyebrows. At this moment a mean-eyed man stumbled in and collapsed on his bed in a stupor. The fat man shouted, "How rude of you, Kolya! We have a guest!" Kolya began to snore.

I got up to leave without thinking, instinctively. The fat man sat up and spread his arms. "Where are you going? Listen, I personally will guarantee your safety. No need even to check your bag!"

Grabbing my luggage, I thanked him and said that I was just on my way out to get a bite to eat.

His eyes widened. "In *Chernyshevsk*?"

Down in the lobby I approached the left-luggage attendant, a sturdy middle-aged woman who looked sensible in horn-rimmed glasses and a neat blue uniform.

"I've got to go to the hotel."

"You are a nice young man," she said, sighing and removing her glasses. "It's already getting dark. We have very dangerous streets. No one goes outside at such an hour. We are scared even during the day. There are robberies and beatings and worse. I'm from here, but I'll tell you, we have been cursed by God. Chernyshevsk is exile, the end of the road."

Much of the foul history of this land can be traced back to Nikolai Chernyshevsky, the Russian revolutionary author, and his flat socialist propaganda novel *What Is to Be Done?*, composed in St. Petersburg's Fortress of Peter and Paul during 1862, in which he wrote, "[The socialist society] is bright. It is wonderful. Love it. Strive toward it. Work for it. Bring it nearer. Bring as much as you can from it into our present." For these now-forgotten words the czarist au-

(Continued on page 36)

Frozen breath hits the ground with an audible tinkling: "whispering of the stars," it is called.

under Muscovy's control the terrain east of the Urals. Much more than real estate was at stake: Siberia abounded in furs—sable, beaver, polecat, mink, fox, and wolf—and under late czarist and Soviet rule would prove to be one of the natural-resource treasure chests of the planet, containing vast oil and natural-gas fields, coal reserves, lodes of ferrous and nonferrous metals, gold, dia-

APRIL
1997

Arts & ENTERTAINMENT

PREVIEW

Classical
Giya Kancheli's
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Landscapes

Jazz
The Lyrical
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Brothers

*Popular
Music*
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Love From
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Classical Music

BY AUSTIN BAER

OPERA FOR COUCH POTATOES

Carp as one may about opera on television (and the match was not made in heaven), broadcasts do save one a lot of running around. Last summer cognoscenti crossed seas and continents for the world premiere of Tobias Picker's *Emmeline*, in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and for the Peter Sellars staging of Handel's oratorio *Theodora* at England's high-toned festival at Glyndebourne. On April 2 both may be seen from the comfort of one's armchair. *Emmeline* (on PBS) recounts the supposedly true history of an unwed mother who unwittingly married her long-lost son. As the heroine goes from rural New England poverty to the abuse of the dark, satanic textile mills of Lowell, Massachusetts, Picker's score gives each scene along her Dickensian way a sharp musical profile. No less important, his characters have voices. If some of those voices verge on caricature, *Emmeline*'s does not: her anxieties, joys, and anguish are expressed with unaffected, richly varied eloquence. The spare, stylized staging probably registered more powerfully in the theater than it does on television,



No need for tickets: *Emmeline* on PBS

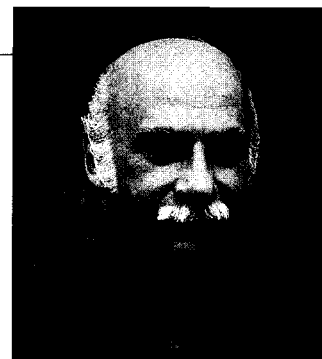
but the work's quality comes through, and in the demanding title role Patricia Racette delivers all Picker could have hoped for and more. *Theodora* (on Ovation) is a more schizoid affair, Handel's mostly action-free hagiography serving strictly as a pretext for the latest Sellars study of a narrow band of abnormal psychology. As usual, the characters are conceived as fanatics, paranoiacs, or (if wicked) buffoons. Once again, the chorus signs as it sings, accompanying itself with redundant semaphore. Of course the action is transposed, irrelevantly, to these here United States, circa now. Yet there are inspired touches—a double execution by lethal injection, hauntingly hand in glove with the music. Thanks to the conductor, William Christie, and a superlative cast, the performance entrances the ear. The telecast is also good to look at: lighting and camera work invite comparison with the landmark advertising campaigns for Clinique cosmetics. Whether one buys the package as a contribution to serious public discourse on serious matters, which the director claims it is, is a question of conscience.

A GROUP WITH LOTS OF PLUCK

Mail Artek/458 Strings! The seven players' instruments include (in alphabetical order) archlute, guitar, harp, harpsichord, lute, theorbo, and viola da gamba—plus organ, which, though adding nothing to the string count, enhances resonance. The group's CD *Love Letters From Italy* is a beauty: a seventeenth-century program graced by voluptuous yet pointed vocals from the countertenor Drew Minter, which deserves love letters in return (Lyrichord; for mail orders call 212-929-8234). On April 18 and 20 an all-



instrumental bill at Manhattan's Tiffany-bedecked Chapel of the Angels, St. Michael's Church, 99th Street and Amsterdam Avenue, promises "toe-tapping arrangements of your favorite baroque music." Be kind: wear soft shoes. (Tickets: 212-873-0473.)



Kanchevili captures the elements

COMPOSING NATURE

Giorgi Kanchevili was nineteen when he realized that geology was not for him. "My first expedition," he has said, "was a twelve-mile walk in ninety-five-degree heat, carrying a very heavy load. When I got back that evening, I drew up a list of professions that would not require much walking." He chose composing. More than four decades later his music bears witness, perhaps, to the susceptibility that once attracted him to the study of earth: a spiritual hunger for landscapes carved by the elements and untouched by the hand of man, vastnesses in which the spirit can hear the universe and hear itself. A native of the former Soviet republic of Georgia, now resident in Berlin, Kanchevili writes music in which instrumental voices sound like human voices and human voices can sound like instruments. He renders silence in a thousand gradations, as Nature does, or unleashes cataclysms from a clear sky. His inspiration, he has said, depends greatly on the view from his window. And what does he like to see? His answer, in Georgian, comes only after a long pause. "A big open space is very nice," his daughter translates, "but when it's small, I try to find some beauty in a small space. What is most important is not what I can see but what I can't see." Into those negative spaces he pours his music. Last month ECM New Series issued *Caris Mere (After the Wind)*, the label's fourth luminously realized Kanchevili offering. Symphonies are another point of entry into the Kanchevili canon. A notable Sony Classical disc couples the sixth and seventh (but beware dynamic spikes that can blow a speaker or an eardrum). And next month the exciting young maestro Franz Welser-Möst performs the third with the New York Philharmonic (May 8-10; 212-721-6500).

Austin Baer is a writer based in New York.

Popular Music and Jazz

BY BOB BLUMENTHAL AND CHARLES M. YOUNG

INDUSTRIAL GUITAR

Back in the late 1950s John Fahey taught himself to play guitar by listening to the old blues 78s he was collecting. In the process he reinvented the steel-string acoustic as a solo instrument and started a whole industry, now thriving with its own magazines, books, and ever-more-refined guitars with all the accouterments. Fahey's own career has gone through strange ups and downs on a variety of labels, but right now he appears to be on the verge of his highest point since the early 1970s. Rediscovered by Sonic Youth and other rock-and-roll experimentalists, Fahey has been receiving more press than ever, and his early work is in the process of being reissued on Rhino (*Return of the Repressed*, a best-of anthology) and Fantasy/Takoma (*The Legend of Blind Joe Death*, his first album). And he's releasing his first album of original work in six years, *City of Refuge* (Tim/Kerr Records). Influenced by classical and avant-garde composers as well as Delta bluesmen, Fahey here throws in elements of electronic music, so you may



A guitar pioneer takes refuge in the '90s

at first think you're listening to the Chemical Brothers or Aphex Twin. Mixing the pure sound of a steel string vibrating over a wooden box with synthesized pounding, chugging, and pulsing may seem odd, but it's a good fit. Fahey has always been known for his relentless right thumb, which creates trance-inducing rhythms on the bass strings, and he's always been fascinated with sound. Where most guitarists seek to wow their audience with speed and dexterity, Fahey flattens you with the sheer resonant beauty of his instrument. On *City of Refuge* that beauty expands to include... what? The hydraulic press you worked on your last summer job. Swarms of angry insects. Dinosaurs mating in a reverb chamber. Fahey's eerie sense of melody has always been surreal. Now it's cubist. —C.M.Y.

TWO PATHS TO A SIMILAR DESTINATION

After gaining initial attention as a team, first with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers and then in the Wynton Marsalis Quintet, the trumpeter Wynton Marsalis and his saxophone-playing brother Branford have been going their separate ways for more than a decade. That the pair should be simultaneously releasing new albums on Columbia is only coincidence, yet—notwithstanding the wide disparities of approach—both recordings find these instrumental stars working with lyrics as a focal point in their music.

Branford's LeFonque

Branford has taken a more eclectic and populist approach since leaving Wynton's band, in 1985. He has toured with Sting, played second banana to Jay Leno on *The Tonight Show*, and created the jazz-hip-hop hybrid Buckshot LeFonque. At the end of 1996 he displayed his continuing command of the soprano and tenor saxes on the uncompromising jazz album *The Dark Keys*. Now Branford is back with the second Buckshot LeFonque collection, *Music Evolution*. His strategy is eclectic in the extreme, as rap vocals lead to smooth ballads with strings, and crunching contemporary rhythms coexist with backward glances at James Brown funk and samba. Spoken editorials drive home Branford's contempt for the niche marketing that this album is designed to frustrate. Yet the variety of styles virtually guarantees inconsistency; and at present Branford's ballads (sung by Frank McComb) are less effective than the snap he is able to extract from a drum program. Buckshot LeFonque sounds best when stretching out instrumentally on "James Brown (Part I & II)" (with guest David Sanborn on alto) or addressing such issues as the jazz-rap continuum ("Music Evolution") and the Million Man March ("Black Monday"). Peeking through it all are solos of great economy and clarity by Branford and the trumpeter Russell Gunn.

Wynton's Jazz Oratorio

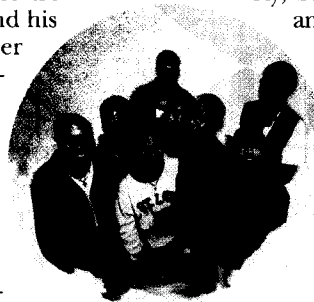
Wynton Marsalis also wants to address the place of African-Americans in society, but prefers the jazz tradition and the extended compositional statement. *Blood on the Fields* is his most ambitious long work, written for the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra and three vocal soloists. Marsalis has learned to orchestrate during his years as artistic director of Jazz at Lincoln Center, and his writing here mixes techniques borrowed from the earliest jazz with complex rhythms and harmonies. The music is meant to serve the narrative, which is both a history of slavery and a love story; and Wynton has been particularly lucky in his choice of featured vocalists. Cassandra Wilson brings her singular intensity to the role of Leona, whether singing a hymn or lamenting a life of picking cotton, and Jon Hendricks adds dexterity and scat to his dual roles as the slave buyer and the sage Juba. The less familiar Miles Griffith as the slave Jesse is the work's major revelation. A veteran of the Boy's Choir of Harlem and the jazz pianist James Williams's Intensive Care Unit, Griffith has a galvanic delivery that on "You Don't Hear No Drums" and other sessions threatens to overwhelm the massed forces of the band. —B.B.

Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra

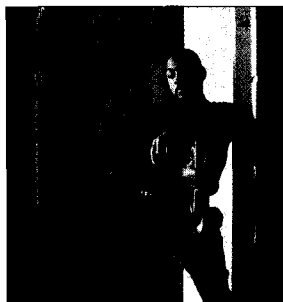


Bob Blumenthal is a jazz critic for The Boston Globe.

Charles M. Young reviews popular music for Playboy, Musician, and other publications.



Buckshot LeFonque (top) and Wynton Marsalis



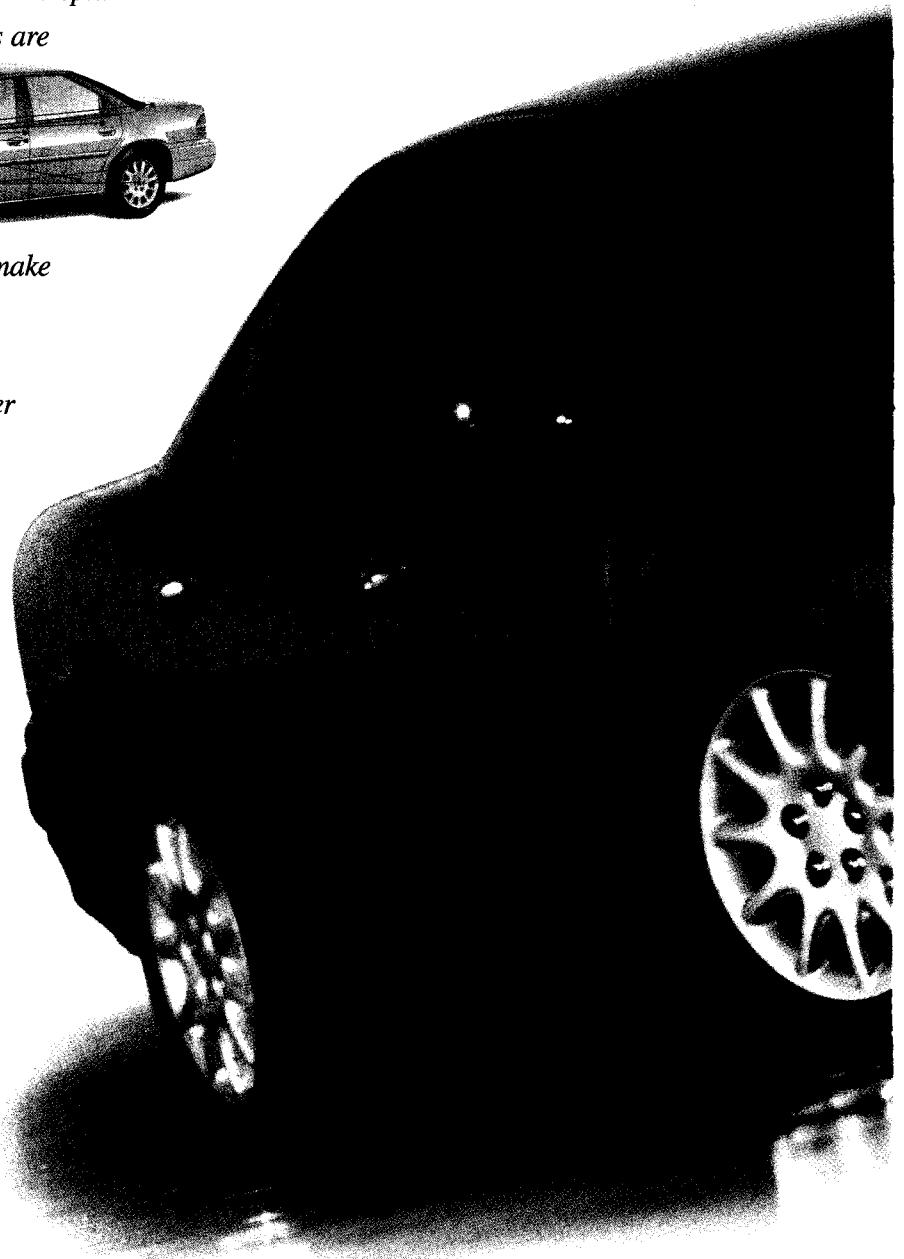
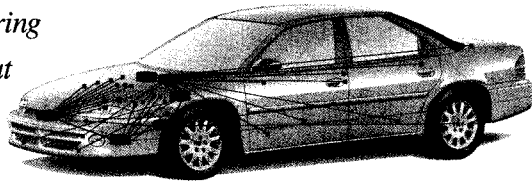
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Film

BY ELLA TAYLOR

WOMEN ON THE VERGE OF A BREAKTHROUGH

Two Melbourne film-school students seek a new roommate as they blunder through a very bad day in *Love and Other Catastrophes*, a perky first feature from twenty-three-year-old Australian filmmaker Emma-Kate Croghan. Self-absorbed but resourceful Mia (Frances O'Connor) wrestles with university bureaucracy as she tries to transfer to the department of a beloved lecturer and author of a book on "feral cinema," while agonizing over her commitment to her girlfriend Danni (Radha Mitchell). Meanwhile, Mia's roommate Alice (Alice Garner) obsesses over her (four years late) dissertation on "Doris Day as Feminist Warrior" and frets that she will never find a man to meet her stringent requirements. By day's end the two women have met some of their goals and grown wiser about the ways of love. *Love and Other Catastrophes* is an unsteady screwball comedy whose philosophy of life ("There are advantages to monogamy," "What?" "You're not alone") is decidedly twentysomething-lite. Yet Croghan has a wicked visual flair, modeled on the grungy anarchic energy of Kevin Smith (*Clerks*) and other low-budget

American filmmakers, a fresh way with words (together with co-writers Yael Bergman and Helen Bandis), and a canny eye to the market that catapulted her from film school into commercial distribution.



All Over Me, a tale of friends and identity

Less eager to please but far more substantial as a coming-of-age story is Alex and Sylvia Sichel's *All Over Me*, a visually assured, emotionally daring film starring the gifted Alison Folland (*To Die For*) as a troubled Hell's Kitchen adolescent who channels her loneliness into unrequited love for her self-destructive best pal (Tara Subkoff), until she finds a richer friendship with a fellow "riot grrl" who helps her discover her own flowering identity.

CADAVEROUS LIAISONS

For a film about necrophilia, Canadian director Lynne Stopkewich's *Kissed* is tender, meditative, and delightfully free of pat psychology. As a child Sandra Larson (Molly Parker) conducted funeral services for dead mice. As an adult she conducts love affairs with cooperatively supine corpses at the funeral parlor where she works as an embalmer. "Every thought you act on pushes you further out," Sandra solemnly tells her jealous boyfriend Matt (Peter Outerbridge), as he becomes more and more obsessed with her extracurricular amours. Stopkewich and co-screenwriter Angus Fraser walk a line between comedy and drama with such agility that by the end of the film you come to see the world from Sandra's matter-of-fact point of view.



Pondering the fatality attraction

Stopkewich merrily informed audience members at the Sundance Film Festival who found the movie's subject sick or arcane that the waiting list at her local library for the story on which the film was based was six months long. So there.

THINGS TO DO IN PARIS WHEN YOU'RE UNDEAD



The deadly Maggie Cheung

Films about filmmaking can be risky business: what seems funny to a director often translates as little more than insider joking to an audience uninitiated or indifferent to movie politics. Not so with *Irma Vep*, a fresh and hilarious comedy from French director and former critic Olivier Assayas. Jean-Pierre Léaud, Truffaut's alter ego and his leading man in several films, beginning with *The 400 Blows*, stars as René Vidal, a washed-up, self-dramatizing director from the French New Wave, with more than a passing resemblance to Truffaut, who's struggling to revitalize

his career. Riding old and new waves, Vidal casts Hong Kong action star Maggie Cheung as Irma Vep in a pointlessly arty remake of the 1915 Louis Feuillade cult-classic serial *Les Vampirs*. Charming and modest, the gorgeous Cheung wanders between hotel, movie set, and the streets of night-time Paris dressed in a rubber suit modeled after Michelle Pfeiffer's Catwoman costume in *Batman Returns*, trying to get a grip on what the moody director wants from her while fending off the advances of an excitable costume designer (Nathalie Richard). Before long jet lag and the extracurricular feuds of the movie crew threaten to dislodge Cheung's sense of the boundaries between her role and her self, and as the director spirals into nervous breakdown, panic grips the set. *Irma Vep* does sterling duty as a wry commentary on the state of French cinema as it grapples with the inroads of Hollywood. But the movie also holds up beautifully as a delirious comedy of boisterous French manners.

Ella Taylor is a film critic for LA Weekly.

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Tune in to The Discovery Channel in April for *Lost at Sea*, a series on shipwrecks and lost treasures. Five episodes explore the downing of the *Lusitania*, the *Edmund Fitzgerald*, and the *Titanic*, along with the lost treasure of Charles I and the infamous Skeleton Coast (April 14-18 at 10:00 P.M.). Dodge is a proud sponsor of these shows and this month's Arts & Entertainment Preview. The answer to March's A&E Challenge—"What Big actor made a 'splash' by winning back-to-back Oscars?"—is "Tom Hanks." Congratulations to February's winner, S. W. Balkin, of Glendale, California.

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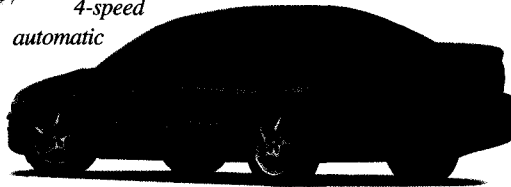
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Avenger  The New Dodge

(Continued from page 28)

thorities in 1864 sentenced him to hard labor at the Nerchinsk mines and imprisonment in Kaday, not far from where I was. There revolutionaries, deprived of the inspiring taigas of more northerly Siberia, got to mine coal, zinc, and lead in one of the bleakest environments on the planet, a barren steppe where the wind wailed day and night and inhabi-

*A gurgling sound
emerged from the dead
man. His arm began
to twitch; his hand
groped for the vodka.*

tants were thankful for blizzards because they calmed the dust squalls.

I finally got directions and headed out the door into the last traces of twilight. The wind had died down. I wandered about among refuse heaps, each with its growling canine sentinel, and between abandoned hovels, avoiding the eyes of the drunks and the rock-toting youths huddled in doorways.

Eventually I came upon a square brick structure some four stories high. I walked over to it and then around it, but could find no door. On the second floor, though, a dim light burned; above it I made out a sign hanging sideways: HOTEL NORTH. A huge plank of plywood lay against the building's entrance. I pushed it aside. At first I could make out nothing inside, but as I stared, my eyes grew accustomed to the dark. Against the back wall three cigarettes glowed orange. There was a cough.

"Is this the hotel?" I asked.

A low voice grumbled that it was. To the left emanated a faint light from a stairway. Unable to see the floor, I stepped inside and onto a shard of glass. The cigarettes alternately glowed and dimmed. My next step landed on someone's wrist and provoked an angry moan of pain. I made it to the stairway through the stench of urine, stepping over bodies and bottles, ascended, and emerged on the second floor.

The administrator, a thin woman in her fifties who was holding her oversized head in her hands like a pale hairy gourd, started at my voice.

"No single rooms," she rasped, clearing her throat. "Only beds in a common room."

"I'll take a whole room. I'll pay for all the places."

The room she showed me was shadowy and ridden with drafts. A window at the far end looked out into a gloom subtly textured with the dark outlines of izbas (wood huts) and the looming vastness of the steppe beyond.

"Where's the light?" I asked her.

"Here," she said, drawing a bulb from her apron. "Plug it in where you like. Either over the sink or by your bed. And just take blankets from the other beds. Our heating is broken. And we don't have a bathroom. The uncultured men we get staying here just use the window as a toilet. I ask you to please use the street!" She said good night and closed the door. I piled all the blankets I could find onto my bed, slid under them dressed as I was, and fell asleep.

Later that night drunken cries that resolved themselves into a malevolent chanting, aggressive and wordless, resonated like a horrific martial hymn. They grew nearer, fully awakening me, and stopped, stifled in asphyxiated gags. There followed a scream and more screams, a frantic scuffling of boots on gravel, and a smashing of glass. Silence.

Silence. Weeks in unheated cattle cars,

forced labor, and malnutrition broke the health of millions whom Stalin delivered into this boreal hell, but it was the senseless suspicion and climate of treachery inspired by Soviet ideology that shattered their spirits and left only cynicism and mute despair in their stead. This affected all Soviet citizens, prisoners or not, Siberians or not, but in Siberia it was particularly bad. From 1929 to 1953 Stalin transformed Russia into the Soviet Union largely through the labor-camp system of Siberia and the fear it generated in his subject population. Speaking out became pointless suicide; language devolved too often into a series of besotted grunts. For many the only remaining escape from the lie of sovietism was descent into an alcoholic stupor, wordless and sullen, repeated over and over again until the cognitive functions withered, the liver gave out, and death arrived as a relief.

In Chernyshevsk this perdition was still everywhere in evidence: spider veins reticulated even young noses; the stench of stale urine lingered after men passed by; *peregar* (the scent of alcohol on human breath—perhaps only Russian has a word for this) crept up on me when I found myself in proximity to others.

SNOW fell during the night. The early-morning sun shone feebly through tattered clouds, dabbing the steppes with tints of pale blue and frail

In Yakutsk, a balmy -58°



yellow. I asked a woman on the street to direct me to Mr. Solovyov's address.

"Mr. Solovyov? You are going to see Mr. Solovyov?" She seemed amazed—even intimidated—and directed me to a squat, unfinished-looking concrete structure around the corner. CHERNYSHEVSK REGION—SOVIET OF PEOPLE'S DEPUTIES read the red-and-gold sign hanging by the entranceway. I walked in.

"You are going to see Mr. Solovyov?" the old doorman said, his lower lip dangling in dumbfounded trepidation. "Please, follow me!" He led me up two flights of stairs, down corridors and around corners, shuffling with an urgency I could not understand, and stopped in front of a doorway. "This is Mr. Solovyov's vice-deputy," he muttered into his armpit, and he hurried away.

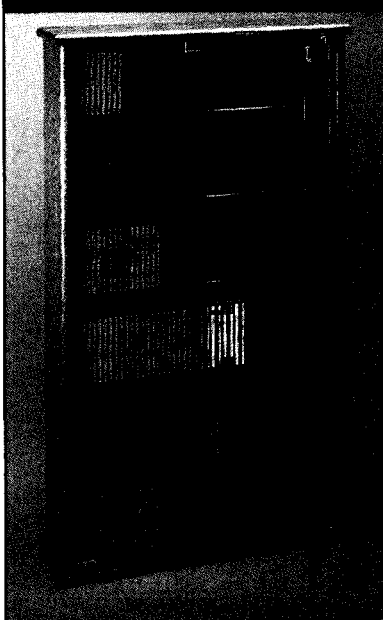
A woman in a gray suit emerged from the office. I explained who I was and that I had been told to see Mr. Solovyov about a ride to Chita. She smiled diffidently and asked me to follow her.

CHAIRMAN OF THE SOVIET OF PEOPLE'S DEPUTIES—V. A. SOLOVYOV read the doorplate of the chamber she led me into. I recoiled almost instinctively, realizing that Solovyov was no mere functionary in some regional government. He was its head, the chief of the soviet—the *governor*, in a word. In the old days such figures did little more than enforce Bolshevik rule in concert with the KGB; at the time of my trip they were biding their time until the Communists returned to power.

Across a sea of red carpet in a cavernous white-walled chamber, Chairman Solovyov sat under a fierce-eyed portrait of Lenin that reached to the ceiling, bellying orders into one of the four phones on his desk, paying us no attention as we approached him. Sturdy of build, with a shock of dark hair, he looked to be about fifty. When he finished with his phone call, his vice-deputy, with a self-effacing hunch to her shoulders and a meek grin, explained that I was an American just passing through Chernyshevsk, seeking a ride to Chita and hoping for Chairman Solovyov's most gracious assistance, and could he possibly see fit to do something to help? She seemed to sink into his carpet as she spoke, growing smaller in stature to mute the veracity of her words, undermining her credibility and mine.

When she ran out of things to say

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about me, she bowed and scurried out. He raised his brows in silent suspicion and his eyes landed on my face like a two-by-four. I could think of nothing to say except that I hoped I was not disturbing him, that perhaps this was too trivial a matter for a Soviet chairman.

He interrupted. "Excuse me—do you have *any* documents that prove you are who you *claim* to be?"

I pulled my passport from my shirt pocket. He took it and reached for the phone. "Viktor, in front of me is a comrade—or rather not a comrade: that is, a man claiming to be an American—who claims to be here trying to get a ride to Chita, where he claims to be going. Step in here at once."

He turned to me. "I have asked the Chernyshevsk chief of internal affairs to verify your story. You claim to be an American. Do you speak English? Why do you speak Russian?"

While I explained, his eyebrows remained elevated in suspicion—a rank and growing suspicion, I could see.

The door flew open. In marched two uniformed militia officers with a small, steely-eyed man, who appeared to be a Buryat, in plain clothes. "Documents!" the small man commanded.

Solovyov handed him my passport.

"You claim to be an American. What is this?" demanded the internal-affairs chief, holding my passport in front of me.

*Wind wailed day and
night, and people were
thankful for the
blizzards that calmed
the dust squalls.*

"An American passport."

He put the passport down slowly, not taking his eyes off me, and then began scrutinizing it, while the militiamen pulled my visa free of the paper clip holding it to the cover. Solovyov stared at me with his hands clasped, his face assuming the contours of Lenin's face above his head.

Much may have changed in Moscow

and European Russia since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, in 1991, but the Asian hinterland remains the domain of xenophobic bureaucrats in whom the presence of a foreigner provokes doubt and bewilderment, even alarm. Local officials reason that their dreary demesnes would never attract a "normal" tourist from abroad. While Muscovites were at work tearing down their Lenin statues, citizens of the outback—which is everywhere but the capital and St. Petersburg—were busy fortifying theirs. On the central square of every town and city I passed through along my 8,325-mile route across the former USSR, Lenin stood vigilant in bronze, right arm outstretched toward the bright socialist future that Chernyshevsky had been exiled to Siberia for promoting—and that the collapse of the USSR was supposed to have repudiated.

Solovyov sat as heavy as a mountain behind his oak desk, his eyes leveled at mine as though I might slip at any moment and reveal the "true" reason I had come to Chernyshevsk. The internal-affairs chief began questioning me about an Egyptian visa in my passport. The militiamen interrogated me about the time of my arrival, whom I had met in town, and the purpose of my trip. After twenty minutes or so of this, Solovyov cleared his throat and they shut up immediately.

"Enough! Mr. Tayler, I am a Communist. Before the recent changes we had no foreigners here in Chernyshevsk. And we have none now. There is anarchy in Moscow, and control is looser than it was. Foreigners do not come to Russia for vacation; they come with certain motives. It is entirely possible that these motives are inimical to the security and well-being of my citizens. You must understand. It is my duty to protect them from such subversive elements."

"I am not an element. I'm just trying to get to Chita."

"You must understand that our investigation is called for under the circumstances." He turned to the chief. "Viktor, it has gone far enough."

The chief, somewhat deflated, handed me my passport. I was relieved but sat still, afraid that I might somehow provoke Solovyov into continuing the interrogation. After a moment of silence I asked if I could use the bathroom. Solovyov accompanied me to the back

lot, where a proud-looking old man with a war medal on the lapel of his gray suit stood waiting for me with toilet paper at the ready. The only facility the soviet had was an outhouse, and the pensioner was its attendant.

When I emerged, Solovyov put his hand on my shoulder. "I have taken the liberty of calling a little meeting of my staff," he said flatly.

Back in his office some thirty former Soviet apparatchiks and functionaries sat around the wall, buzzing and twiddling their pens. We entered, and Solovyov directed me to a seat behind a long table. He took a place next to me and cleared his throat. "Ladies and gentlemen, the first American to visit Chernyshevsk!"

There was a subdued round of applause from amid the pale faces and beehive hairdos and flesh-colored leggings. I bowed.

Solovyov's face was stony, his voice level. "Mr. Tayler will be so kind as to answer a few questions you may have. You can think of the topics yourselves: workers and their rights, issues the simple American struggles with every day, even how much *Santa Barbara* reflects real life."

"Are you married?" a middle-aged woman asked.

"How does your family feel about your traveling to Russia? Are they worried?" asked another.

"Why are you not married? Can you not support a family?"

"What is your income?"

One man in a dark suit, privileged to sit at the end of Solovyov's table, leaned forward intently. "Tell us about your pornography."

A woman exclaimed, "Leave it to the men to ask such questions!" and everyone laughed.

Solovyov silenced the gathering by clearing his throat, and then spoke in an oracular baritone. His people were suffering, he said; Russia's status abroad diminished by the day, production in Chernyshevsk had fallen by 40 percent this year, and the foreign goods that reached his town were shoddy wares of Chinese and Korean provenance. How could I possibly support the reforms? When I began to say that I thought they could have been better planned, he thundered back at me, "Aha! So even you, a capitalist, use the word 'planned'!"

At ten-thirty Solovyov ended the meeting with a sharp clap of his hands and leveled his eyes at the crowd, which fell silent and filed out instantaneously. After that he turned to me and said, "You will be leaving now." The two militiamen marched in from the outer office and took up positions on either side of me.

"Stand up!" Solovyov said. Was I under arrest? What for? He turned away and walked back to his desk. The militiamen led me out the door and down the halls. Heads peered round doorjambs at me, as though I were an apprehended felon. We emerged into the empty lot in front of the building, and a blue-and-white militia car drove up. Snow was dusting the frozen earth, and leaden clouds unfolded over the steppe. One of the officers opened a door for me, and I got in.

"My orders are to take you to the city limits and place you in the first car heading for Chita," he said tersely as we pulled away from the soviet. We trundled down the deserted tracks of Chernyshevsk and picked up the dirt road leading out of town.

IF I was the first American to visit Chernyshevsk, the dynamics of my encounter with Solovyov and his staff were as old as Russia itself, and as indicative of the painfully ambivalent relationship to the West that affects it to this day, even after five years of reform. The Soviet boss took pride in being able to present me to his subordinates, and they brimmed with curiosity about a remote and glittery world of which I was the only genuine example they had ever seen. But he directed this assembly in a way that made it impossible for me to overstep its bounds and enter into the normal human contact that would have resulted without his stewardship. As Westerners were largely segregated under Peter the Great (who invited them to Russia, admired them, and in a brutish but determined way modeled his reforms on their habits), so in the Siberian outback I was often held apart by officials, for as long as I was there, whenever my identity became known. And I was to be put "in the first car heading for Chita." A



"What was beyond from here?"

courtesy? Or a sure way of ridding the town of a "subversive element"?

My officer was grim and silent as he drove. When I commented on the empty *prostory* (expanses) stretching away toward every horizon, he said, "*Prostory*. That's all we have. In America you would have done something with this land, built farms and cities and Disneyland on it. But we have done nothing with it. All we have is *prostory*. It's such a waste."

We had to go a third of the way to Chita before we found a jeep with a pair of geologists in it; they accepted me and I got in. They asked me no questions, spoke not a word to me, though being commanded by a militiaman to haul an American 120 miles to an ICBM site once strictly off limits to foreigners could hardly be an everyday event. I didn't take it personally: I had grown used to feeling irrelevant in the face of the hydra-headed problems with which Russia was wrestling unsuccessfully. The geologists, in turn, seemed irrelevant on this vast plateau under equally vast and threatening skies. No one, nothing, seemed to matter out here.

Throughout my journey the poverty of Siberia's steppes, the monotony of its endless open spaces, the meandering

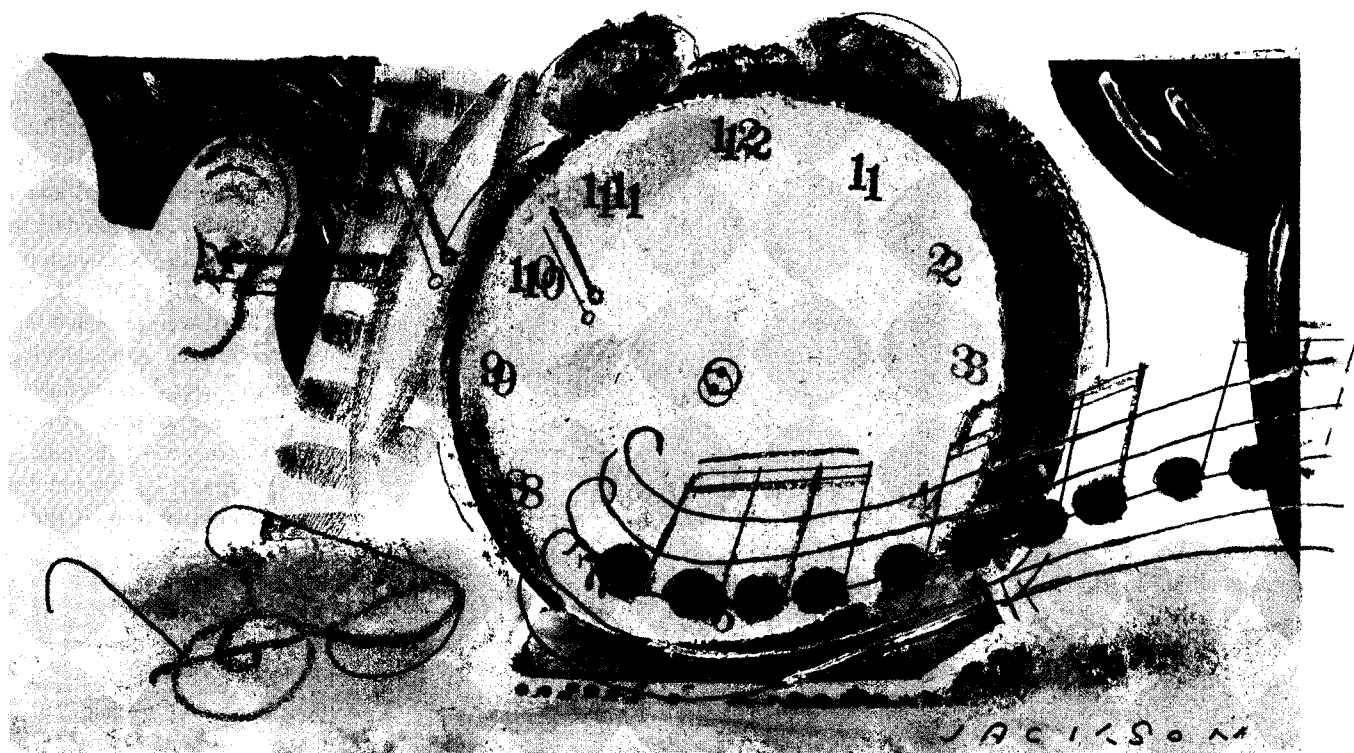
courses of its great rivers, even the umbral folds of its birch and larch forests, often drew me and Russians at my side first into drowsiness, then into reflection, and finally into debates on Russia's past, its grandeur, its future, what *must* be. Ideas and a passion for discourse filled those *prostory*, and my Russian travelmates usually proved to be great talkers, well read, and fervently concerned with achieving a justice greater than the flawed temporal one existing around them. But this was talk, not action—and, at that, talk amid a debased reality that, if there were to be Russia-wide revival, demanded action.

In Chernyshevsk, as elsewhere in Siberia, the past hobbles the present, partly because there is no way to distinguish the two. Although the nomenklatura system of Party days dis-

appeared in the rubble when the USSR collapsed, its former appointees make up an old-boy Red club, and men like Solovyov remain in power throughout the land, with a few notable exceptions. Their domains are hellholes, but they consider them *their* hellholes, reforms or no, and who would dare dispute them? When Yeltsin could have swept the nomenklatura out of office, in 1991, he did not. In the provinces those who had effectively presided over the ruin of the country were left to direct its "reformation," with predictable results.

Still, all around me in eastern Siberia, I could see one effect of the breakup of the police state: without the KGB's whiplash of fear to goad people to even minimal exertion, people weren't working and things were falling apart.

The snow thinned away. The geologists and I trundled across terrain so desolate that it nurtured not a blade of healthy grass. Above us spread ridged clouds of iron threatening some unnameable cataclysm, and the villages we passed, all weathered wooden shacks and decrepit cattle sties, seemed to huddle and cower on the denuded earth. This was hell on earth, I thought—*hell*. Or maybe not. It might better be called limbo, the outermost circle of the inferno, the abode of the lorn and the lost. ☼



Secondhand Music

*The chance harmonies
of everyday sounds may mean more
than we think*

I WOKE recently, in the unfamiliar and unfurnished silence of a new apartment, into a hyperawareness of the music around me. Without recourse to radio, tapes, CDs, or television, I suddenly found myself aware of—no, *listening to*—a sort of secondhand music emanating from the machines and appliances nearby. My alarm clock woke me that morning, as it does every working day, on a distinctly musical note (B natural, to be precise). I shuffled sleepily to the refrigerator, which kept up a stoic hum (B-flat) as I reached into its guts for a frozen bagel. The bagel I subjected to the resolute drone (E) of the microwave, which concluded its efforts with a *ding!* (the B-flat an octave above the refrigerator hum) just as my teakettle began to whistle (A). Later that

morning my subway train pulled me into town with a weary whine (F), and the office elevator deposited me on my floor with a relieved *bleep* (C-sharp). I entered the code (C) of the security system with a staccato flourish and was at work.

I recognized three main tones in my office that morning, a triad that seemed to be a constant. At the bottom was the deep drone of the heater. Above that was the idling of my computer—a smug electronic purr. And whenever I picked up the phone, a dial tone sang insistently in my ear.

Was this music, or just background noise? The question set me off on a somewhat embarrassing hunt for an answer, which often had me bending down awkwardly in public places, pitch pipe in my mouth, trying to determine the

notes played by computer printers, heating units, and the like. What was most interesting to me was the *combinations* of notes in my immediate environment. As my guide, I took Leonard Bernstein.

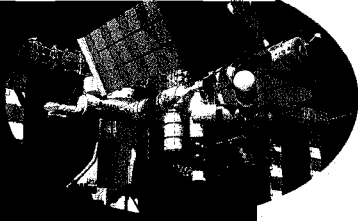
All forms that we have ever known . . . have always been conceived in *tonality*, that is, in the sense of a tonal magnetic center, with subsidiary tonal relationships. This sense, I believe, is built into the human organism; we cannot hear two isolated tones, even devoid of any context, without immediately imputing a tonal meaning to them. We may differ from one another in the tonal meaning we infer, but we infer it nonetheless.

What tonal meaning, if any, could be inferred from the secondhand music all around me? The tones of the various appliances to which I was listening were a study in misalliances; they certainly didn't all go together, but I was hearing them together nonetheless. What this music means as an accompaniment to a day in the office—or a night in bed, for that matter—is worth considering.

NO other artistic medium moves us the way sound waves do, and in that regard music's meaning is emotional, in the word's original sense. The languages of music and emotion are remarkably

by Toby Lester

WHAT KIND
OF PEOPLE
PROFIT
FROM THEIR
COUNTRY'S
PROPRIETARY
INFORMATION
?



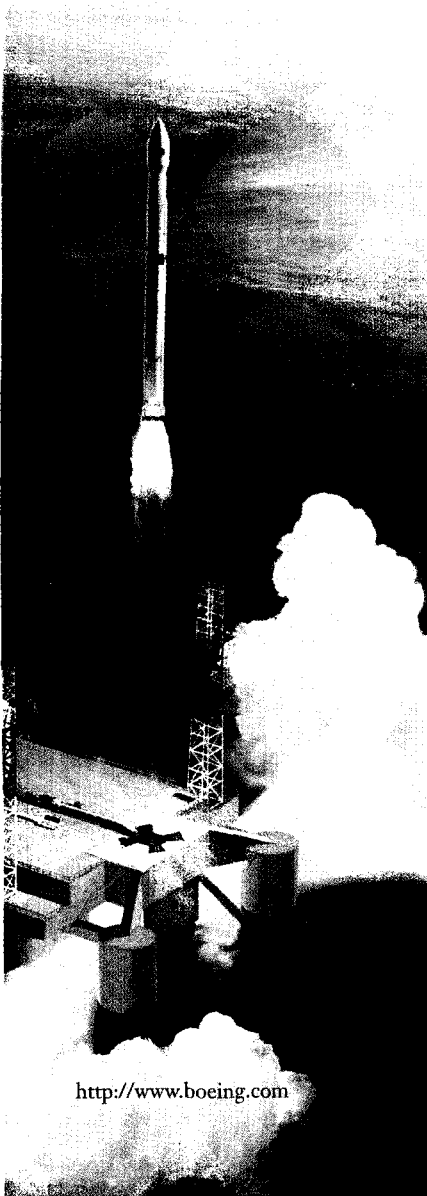
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similar; indeed, the link between musical mode and emotional mood has been the subject of philosophical inquiry and censorious dogma for centuries. Certain modes of music were to be kept out of Plato's ideal State because they evoked sorrowful or ungraceful or indolent feelings (Socrates: "When modes of music change, the fundamental laws of the State always change with them"). Saint Augustine feared the power of music to overwhelm the spiritual message of the hymns it accompanied, and this fear led the Church to pronounce certain musical modes—and even certain melodic intervals—dissonant and unlawful. Soviet censors, too, were notorious: they tried, for example, to keep Shostakovich's lugubrious dissonances (and their political overtones) in check.

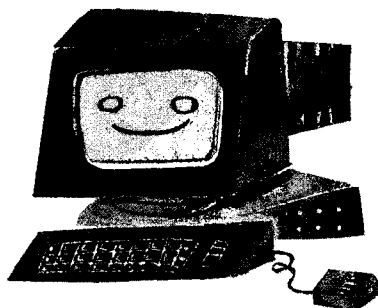
The musical mode considered least dissonant (and thus most standard) in our Western tradition is the major mode, which is often equated with positive emotions, such as happiness, triumph, and love. The scale upon which the mode is based—*do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, ti, do*—is a sequence of intervals (tones and semitones) that sounds very natural to Western ears as it moves familiarly up and down toward resolution on *do*. Stop in mid-scale, though—say, at *fa* or *la*—and you feel the need to continue. What's happening is that the musical intervals *do-fa* and *do-la* represent suspended motion; they demand resolution without supplying it. Resolve this tension in the expected manner, and the result is a confident and happy feeling of coming home.

Take a simple melody we all know—"The Star-Spangled Banner." The mode is major, and the opening can be expressed as follows:

(sol) (mi) (do) (mi) (sol) (do)
Oh — oh say can you see

It's a jolly little ditty: unambiguous and unsurprising. Notice that *mi* is most important to the melody's movement; it seems naturally to pull the melody along. That natural movement translates into the melody's positive emotional meaning.

Even the slight departure from the natural movement of a major scale caused by raising or lowering one of its notes a semitone (making the note sharp or flat) brings about a significant change in

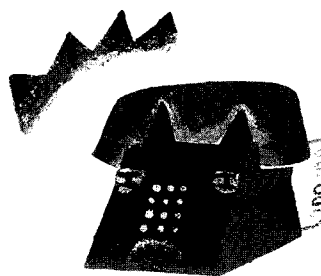


mood. Flat *mi* in the combination (*do, mi, sol*), for example, and the mode is suddenly minor rather than major—a change that suggests the expression of negative emotions, such as sadness, anxiety, and melancholy. (Not surprisingly, in jazz and blues *mi-flat*—more commonly known as a "flatted third"—is often referred to as a "blue" note.) The Beatles' "Eleanor Rigby" is a good example. The song asks, "All the lonely people, where do they all come from?" and uses the minor mode to heighten the question's resonance. Part of the melody goes like this:

(fa) (fa) (sol) (mi-flat) (do)
El — ean — or Rig — by

Central to this tune's motive power is *mi*, which, once again, seems to pull the melody along. But in this case *mi* is flatted—"depressed," one might say—and thus disappoints our expectations. That sense of disappointment and tension creates the melody's emotionally negative resonances.

This shift from *mi* to *mi-flat* is one of the more obvious demonstrations of the emotional valence of musical intervals. One might even say that combinations of notes played together take on, in our minds, a metaphorical function—simply speaking, for example, *do-mi* becomes happiness and *do-mi-flat* becomes sadness. As Leonard Bernstein puts it, "That's the unique miracle of music: that it enables us to perceive This and That simultaneously; there can be no stronger or richer presentation of



metaphor." And the fact is that we respond instinctively to metaphor and make predictable emotional inferences from it. Movie music, elevator music, and advertising jingles all depend absolutely on this process.

If music is a metaphorical language, then conceivably it is possible to unpack the meaning of the various intervals, or metaphors, that have such power. It is precisely this curious task that the music critic Deryck Cooke, in his largely ignored *The Language of Music*, has attempted. Cooke takes as his starting point the notes normally played by Western instruments (think of the white and black notes on a piano, or a chromatic scale) and then distills an emotional lexicon from all the possible combinations of notes. The happy *do-mi* discussed above, for example, contains elements of "concord" and "joy," while the sad *do-mi-flat* builds "stoic acceptance" and "tragedy" into much the same sense of concord. Cooke's lexicon describes a variety of emotional modulations, brash and subtle, and the emphasis is on the relationship between mode and mood: an octave (*do-do*), for example, is "emotionally neutral," *do-fa-sharp* is "devilish and inimical," and *do-la-flat* is "active anguish in a context of flux" (making it, one might suppose, the interval of choice for the new national anthems of emerging Eastern European democracies).

Cooke's musical dictionary is not intended to be definitive, but it is a useful construct. With it in mind, let's return now to the music played by my office.

The musical root, or tonic, of my office is established by the persistent and low-pitched hum of the heater. (I have caught myself at work humming a number of random and unrelated songs, but, significantly, have found that I hum *every single one* in the key established by the office heater.)

If my office heater provides the tonic, the chord my office plays is the following:

(do) (mi) (fa-sharp)
heater computer dial tone

Look up the meaning of the different intervals in Cooke's lexicon and you'll see that my office plays a curious combination of intervals, one joyous and stable (*do-mi*), another devilish and inimical

(do-fa-sharp), and the third (mi-fa-sharp) emotionally neutral. The overall result is an ambiguous chord that, at its upper end, begs for resolution. Could this ambiguity and tension be one reason I so often feel on edge? Is it accidental that the interval created on the telephone between the dial tone and the sound of ringing at the other end is the consonant do-mi? Or that the interval between the dial tone and a busy signal is a dissonant do-fa-sharp? Cooke, as we saw, calls the do-fa-sharp inimical. Bernstein goes even further, calling it

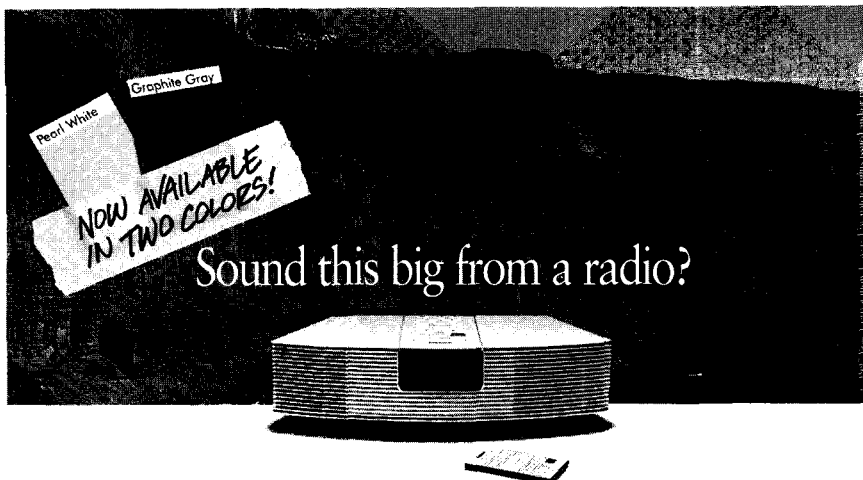
the most unstable interval there is—the absolute negation of tonality. And it is this interval . . . that the early Church fathers declared . . . unacceptable and illegal, calling it *diabolus in musica* (the devil in music).

The devil in the telephone. That's certainly a novel way of thinking about a daily aggravation. But in a way it is just stating the obvious. The busy signal is an unsettling negation of tonality. We know that, and that's why we hang up irritated. We all know the language of music very well, and respond to it instinctively.

If I'm plagued by the *diabolus in musica* during the day, what am I to make of the fact that I wake every morning to the interval do-re-flat—"spiritless anguish, context of finality"—created by my refrigerator and alarm clock?

PEOPLE have been making music for a long time, but machines haven't. Ours are the first few generations whose entire existence, waking and sleeping, is often accompanied by secondhand music. We have inherited an understanding of music as metaphor, and now we are being subjected to what might be considered subliminal messages—oblique emotional statements delivered by the appliances that fill our modern lives. Background noise is not just background noise. Secondhand music enters our minds, speaking a language that we understand, even if we don't consciously listen. That language can make us happy and content, or can occasion solemn brooding. Most likely, though, we'll be left somewhere in between, mildly unsettled by the ambiguous intervals in our lives.

If there's a lesson in all of this, it's that you should listen to what you hear—and, if necessary, go out and get a new refrigerator. ☞



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Underground Rome

*A good way to study
ancient Rome is to explore the
cellars—and subcellars—of
modern Rome*

BENEATH modern Rome is a hidden city, as still as Rome is chaotic, as dark as Rome is luminous, with its own peculiar animals, powerful odors, frigid waters, and spectacular ancient remains. Explorers will find theaters, baths, stadia, imperial villas, apartment buildings, fire stations,

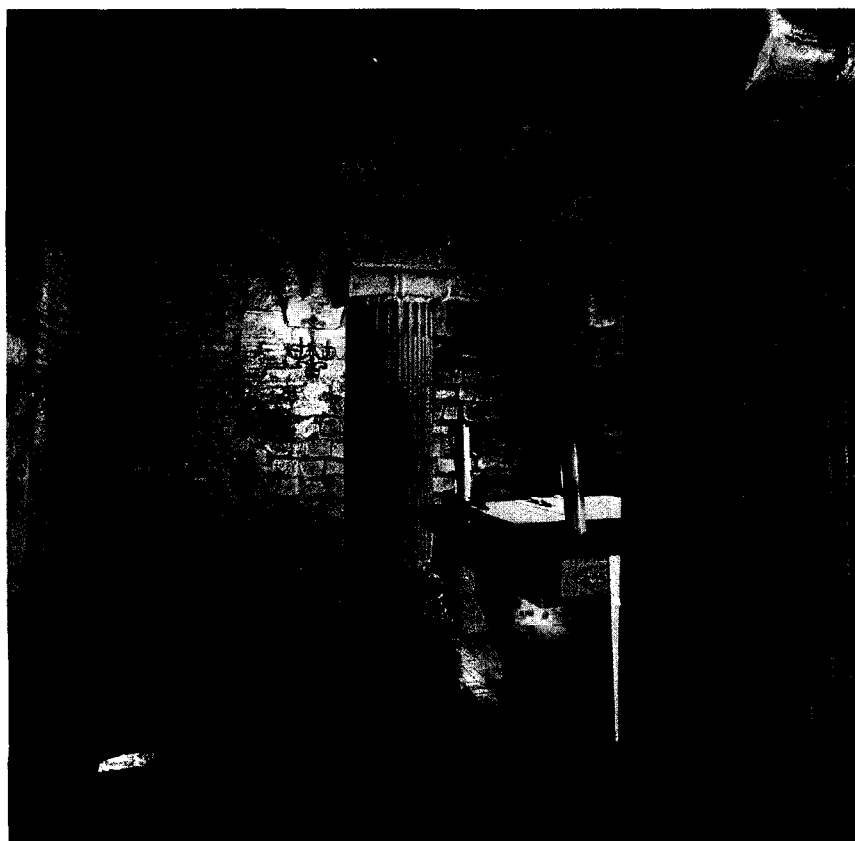
by Tom Mueller

and pagan temples—even an enormous sundial that used an Egyptian obelisk as a pointer. Millions of people come to Rome each year in search of antiquity, and walk unsuspectingly across these buried treasures during their tours of the celebrated surface ruins. Though structures like the Pantheon and

the Coliseum are certainly impressive, they represent only a small fraction of the ancient city, and wind, rain, and air pollutants have not treated them kindly over the years. Wrapped in a thick protective blanket of earth, Rome's subterranean structures have endured the incessant chiseling of people and elements far better. With persistence and the occasional help of a guide, a visitor can explore this underground realm, to discover bright windows on Roman history and clues to the evolution of the modern city long vanished from the surface.

Ancient Rome slipped from sight gradually, in a 2,500-year process of natural silting and intentional burial that was already well advanced in classical times. Roman architects frequently tore the roofs from old buildings and filled their interiors with dirt, to make solid foundations for new structures. They embedded earlier buildings in tremendous landfills that raised the ground level of the entire site by several yards. Sometimes they entombed whole neighborhoods in this way. After the Great Fire of A.D. 64 devastated two thirds of the city, Nero spread the debris over the wreckage of republican Rome and then reshaped the city to his liking. Later, during Rome's long, bleak Middle Ages, nature continued the interment. The population shrank to tiny pockets within the broad ring of the imperial walls, abandoning the ancient city to relentless erosion that wore away the uplands and redistributed them over low-lying areas. Roman buildings that remained exposed contributed significantly to the landfill. Archaeologists have estimated that the collapse of a one-story Roman house produced detritus six feet deep over its entire plan. Considering that Rome once boasted 40,000 apartment buildings, 1,800 palaces, and numerous giant public buildings, of which almost nothing survives, it is clear that the ancient city is buried under its own remains.

By 1580, when Montaigne visited Rome, the classical city was all but invisible. He observed that when modern Ro-



*Ancient Roman columns in
a medieval crypt. Above, a cult
statue of Mithras the bull-slayer*

*Heading down the Natchez Trace
with a full tank of*

cheese grits.

*I*t was getting late. The sky had changed from blue to orange, and the Mississippi moon was signaling us to pull over and rest.

The sign said another 15 miles to Tupelo. We kept our car at a leisurely pace, taking in the beauty of the country houses with their rolling pastures and fishing ponds.

After all, our century-old bed and breakfast wasn't going anywhere.

Stepping through the tall doors of the majestic antebellum home was like wandering into a Norman Rockwell painting. A small chandelier hung in the foyer, and a wide circular stairway lined with paintings of distant relatives swept down from the balcony.

Our room had a huge mahogany bed with big goose down pillows and an old set of family

china laid out on an antique table. The window was above the garden, which by now was sprinkled with fireflies. I have

to admit, somehow, this house did feel like home.

This morning, my hunch was confirmed: Southerners like big breakfasts. Really big. Our hosts made cheese grits,

eggs, toast, country sausage and cinnamon apples. I suppose we'll need it. There are a lot of stops along the Natchez Trace between here and the casinos. And we're not going to miss any of them.

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mans dug into the ground, they frequently struck the capitals of tall columns still standing far below. "They do not seek any other foundations for their houses than old ruined buildings or vaults, such as are seen at the bottom of all the cellars." Impressed by the spectacle of the triumphal arches of the Forum rising from deep in the earth, he noted, "It is easy to see that many [ancient] streets are more than thirty feet below those of today." Even now the burial process continues. Each year an inch of dust falls on Rome, composed of leaves, pollution, sand from the nearby seacoast, and a stream of powder from hundreds of ruins dissolving steadily in the wind. In certain places we are more than ten yards farther from ancient Rome than Montaigne was.

A GOOD place to begin exploring Rome's layers is San Clemente, a twelfth-century basilica just east of the Coliseum. Descend the staircase in the sacristy and you find yourself in a rectangular hall decorated with fading frescoes and greenish marbles, lit by sparse bulbs strung up by the excavators. This is the original, fourth-century San Clemente, one of Rome's first churches. It was condemned around A.D. 1100 and packed full of earth, Roman-style, as a platform for the present basilica. A narrow stair near the apse of this lower church leads down to the first-century structures upon which it, in turn, was built: a Roman apartment house and a small temple. The light is thinner here; cresses and fungi patch the dark brick and grow delicate halos on the walls behind the bare bulbs. Deeper still, on the fourth level, are several rooms from an enormous public building that was apparently destroyed in the Great Fire and then buried by Nero's architects. At about a dozen yards belowground the massive tufa blocks and herringbone brickwork are slick with humidity, and everywhere is the sound of water, flowing in original Roman pipes. No one has excavated below this level, but something is there, for

the tufa walls run another twenty feet or so down into the earth. Something is buried beneath everything in Rome.

Most major landmarks, in fact, rest on construction that leads far back into the past. Tucked under Michelangelo's salmon-pink Senatorial Palace on the Capitoline Hill is a tidy little temple to Veiovis, a youthful Jove of the underworld, among the most ancient gods of the Roman pantheon. Beneath the sanctuary excavators have found traces of a still-earlier shrine. A small passageway in the south exterior wall of St. Peter's Basilica leads into an eerily intact Roman necropolis that underlies the entire center aisle. The passage becomes the main



*A cavernous shrine to Mithras,
beneath San Clemente*

street of a miniature city of the dead, fronted by ornate two-story mausoleums on which Christ and the Apostles stand alongside Apollo, Isis, Bacchus, and rampaging satyrs. This necropolis first came to light in the Renaissance, when the basilica was rebuilt: pontiffs and architects watched in horror as an endless stream of pagan relics issued from the floor of Catholicism's most sacred church.

In the cellar of the massive, four-square Palazzo della Cancelleria, in the heart of Rome, is a stretch of the Euripus, an ornamental canal that traversed

this area, once a garden district. Now far belowground, it still brims with water, clear and unearthly blue. Writing from exile, a homesick Ovid fondly recalled the Euripus flowing between elegant lawns and porticoes. Ancient graffiti still visible beside the canal express less-elevated sentiments. "Scummy Ready-for-Anything gives it to her lovers all the time," an anonymous Roman penned in careful letters. "Crap well," another wrote just beside, either in response or as a general exhortation to passers-by.

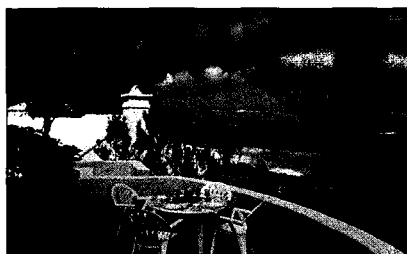
Striking subterranea underlie the most ordinary scenes. A trapdoor in the courtyard of a bustling apartment complex on Via Taranto, not far from San Giovanni in Laterno, opens upon two perfect Roman graves, festooned with fresco grapevines and pomegranates, bewailed by red and blue tragic masks, guarded by mosaic goddesses. The nondescript palazzo at Via della VII Coorte 9, in the Trastevere district across the river, sits atop a complete Roman fire station, with its broad internal courtyard and central fountain, sleeping quarters, latrine, and shrine to the divinity who protected firemen. The busy train tracks on the eastern border of Porta Maggiore conceal a mysterious hall known as the Underground Basilica, apparently the temple of a first-century neo-Pythagorean cult. Hand-

some mosaic floors, three aisles, and a semicircular apse give it the look of a church, but stucco friezes on the walls show Orpheus leading Eurydice back from Hades, Heracles rescuing Hesione from the sea monster, and other scenes of mythological deliverance.

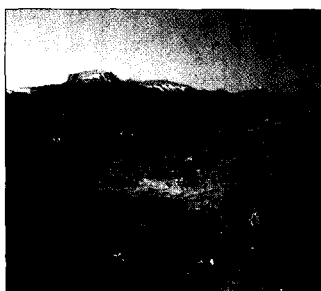
The grandest of all Roman subterranea lies beneath the shabby gardens on the eastern slopes of the Esquiline Hill, where homeless immigrants sleep and children play roughneck soccer against the startlingly big backdrop of the Coliseum. An entrance of crumbling brickwork leads down into the Golden House, a vast, megalomaniacal residence that Nero built atop ruins from the Great Fire; his successors, after damming

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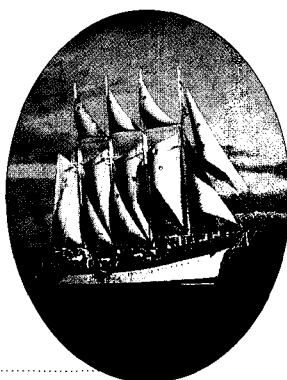
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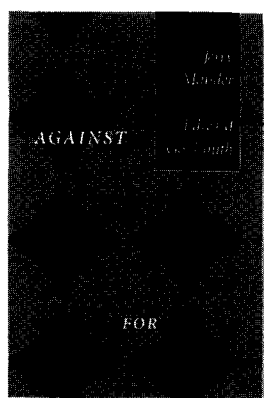


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Nero's memory, covered it with the Coliseum and other public buildings. An entire wing of the villa is buried here—a labyrinth of corridors, vaulted chambers, and domed halls immersed in total darkness. Here and there a flashlight will illumine sections of the original Roman decoration: landscapes alive with mythological beasts and odd anthropomorphic figures. These frescoes attracted the greatest artists of the Renaissance, who clambered down with torches to sketch the drawings, hold merry picnics of apples, prosciutto, and wine, and scratch their names unselfconsciously into the plaster (many famous autographs, including Domenico Ghirlandaio, Martin van Heemskerck, and Filippino Lippi, are still visible). They emerged from these underground rooms—"grottoes," as they called them—to decorate Rome in a new, "grotesque" style.

Exploring Rome's subterranea, one learns certain rules of thumb. Low-lying areas like Trastevere, which millennia of floods have paved in heavy layers of silt, are rich in sites. Even better are zones that have been continuously inhabited since classical times (the Campo Marzio, for example, with the Pantheon at its center), where subterranea have escaped the violence of deep modern foundations. For much the same reason churches make excellent hunting. In many crypts and side chapels are shadowy locked doorways that the sacristan can often be persuaded to open, for a modest contribution. They lead down to Roman baths, taverns, prisons, military barracks, brothels, and other remains. Pagan temples are especially common, perhaps because Christian builders wanted to occupy and eradicate the sacred places of competing religions. Beneath the polished marble floors of San Clemente, Santa Prisca, Santo Stefano Rotondo, and several other churches are shrines to Mithras, an Iranian god of truth and salvation who was one of Jesus' main rivals during the later empire. These snug, low-roofed halls

are flanked by benches where the worshippers reclined, with a niche at the far end for the cult statue: a heroic young Mithras in a flowing cape, plunging his sword into the neck of an enormous bull. By the warm light of torches all-male congregations once worshipped Mithras here in strange rites of water and blood, vaguely suggested in graffiti still visible beneath Santa Prisca: "Sweet are the livers of the birds, but worry reigns." "And you redeemed us by shedding the eternal blood."

FOR some Romans the hidden city beneath their feet has become an obsession. The photographer Carlo Pavia, lean and intense, has for the past twenty years rappelled down into ancient mines and apartment houses, scuba-

dived in underground halls filled with icy groundwater, and pulled on hip waders and a gas mask and slogged back into the Cloaca Maxima, an ancient sewer that winds its way beneath much of Rome. He describes unearthly scenes: colonies of fat albino worms; rats as big as lapdogs; Afri-



A honeycomb-style tomb,
funerary urns still in place

can and Arabian plants flourishing in the rooms beneath the Coliseum, grown from seeds fallen from the coats of exotic animals imported by the Romans for their entertainments. Packs of *saltericchi*, a kind of jumping spider, rove the deepest, most humid recesses. "At the first sign of light they panic and start hopping around," Pavia explains. "I have to move carefully, shooing them ahead of me with my lamp." Pavia recently founded a magazine, *Forma Urbis*, that each month illustrates selected sites with his outstanding photographs.

Other subterraneophiles are less athletic but equally obsessed. Emanuele Gatti is a round, jovial retiree who has devoted much of his life to underground Rome. As a government archaeologist he oversaw more than thirty years' worth of construction projects in the historic center, and he has fleshed out his experiences

with painstaking archival research to produce a detailed map of ancient remains—a kind of x-ray that lays a faint modern city over the sharp, clear bones of its subterranea. He runs his hand over the sea of symbols and annotations that is his magnum opus, eagerly indicating points of contact between the two worlds. “See here how the façade of the Parliament building rests directly on the façade of Alexander’s Baths? Ancient walls still support modern buildings like this throughout the city. They are still ‘alive,’ you might say.” Gatti hopes that some of the billions of dollars to be spent beautifying Rome for the Great Jubilee in the year 2000, a twelve-month festival of the Catholic Church that may bring some 40 million additional visitors to the city, will help to preserve the underground city and make it more accessible.

A few people are working on accessibility already. Three years ago Bartolomeo Mazzotta, then a graduate student in archaeology, assembled a handful of fellow experts to form Itinera, one of several new tour services that specialize in underground Rome. These services provide the best way to explore many subterranea, presenting a detailed introduction to the history and archaeology of the sites and supplying government permits that are difficult for individuals to arrange. For a modest fee you join a group of ten to twenty on a visit that lasts about an hour. Though the commentary is normally in Italian, most guides can field questions in English as well. Veteran visitors bring a flashlight, wear sturdy shoes that will give good traction on wet ground, and drape a sweater or shawl over their shoulders, as subterranea are often chilly even in the summer.

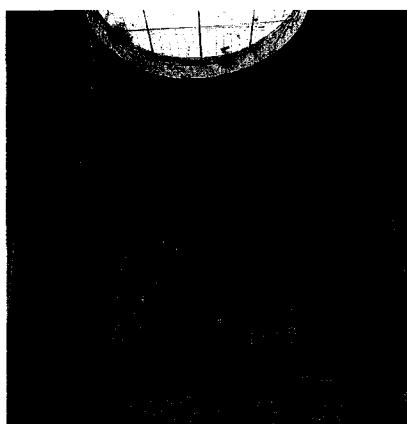
Most of the tour services schedule their visits months in advance and have a devoted following, so it is a good idea to book by telephone at least two weeks ahead. The best ones, such as Itinera

(011-396-275-7323) and LU.PA. (396-519-3570), are run by trained archaeologists with years of experience below-ground. Other good choices include Genti e Paesi (396-8530-1755) and Città Nascosta (396-321-6059), which generally take a more historical or art-historical approach. All these will arrange custom tours of multiple sites for groups. A complete listing of scheduled visits appears each week in *Romac’è*, a booklet available at newsstands in Rome and on the World Wide Web (<http://www.villedit.it>). Beyond specific tours he leads, an expert like Mazzotta is a gold mine of information about the best parts of underground Rome to visit, which sites are closed for renovation, and which can be seen without a permit. Mazzotta explains that most tour participants

are Romans, who are increasingly eager to explore the lower city. He says, “*Roma sotterranea* is becoming a real cult.”

In fact it is a very old cult, though some of its most ardent believers prefer to remain anonymous. Houses and workshops in the older neighborhoods of Rome frequently perch

atop ancient remains, which here and there jab stone fingers up through the surface, just as Montaigne witnessed four centuries ago: massive granite columns sprouting from basement floors, Roman brick archways ridging foundation walls. The inhabitants, often elderly Romans whose families have lived in the same buildings for generations, may guard their secret subterranea carefully, fearing eviction by government authorities if word gets out. Gain their trust, however, and they will show off their underground treasures with great pride. They tell of other subterranea—deep tunnels that traverse the city, vast and mysterious sanctuaries and palaces, a realm of oral tradition somewhere between science and legend. These elderly Romans are acutely aware of the lower city beneath their surface lives. Rome, they say, is haunted by its subterranea. ☼



A subterranean room in Nero's ostentatious Golden House

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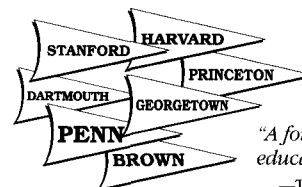
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SHOULD ENGLISH BE THE LAW?

by ROBERT D. KING

Language is tearing apart countries around the world, and the proponents of "Official English" may be ready to add America to the list



E have known race riots, draft riots, labor violence, secession, anti-war protests, and a whiskey rebellion, but one kind of trouble we've never had: a language riot. Language

riot? It sounds like a joke. The very idea of language as a political force—as something that might threaten to split a country wide apart—is alien to our way of thinking and to our cultural traditions.

This may be changing. On August 1 of last year the U.S. House of Representatives approved a bill that would make English the official language of the United States. The vote was 259 to 169, with 223 Republicans and thirty-six Democrats voting in favor and eight Republicans, 160 Democrats, and one independent voting against. The debate was intense, acrid, and partisan. On March 25 of last year the Supreme Court agreed to review a case involving an Arizona law that would require public employees to conduct government business only in English. Arizona is one of several states that have passed "Official English" or "English

Only" laws. The appeal to the Supreme Court followed a 6-to-5 ruling, in October of 1995, by a federal appeals court striking down the Arizona law. These events suggest how divisive a public issue language could become in America—even if it has until now scarcely been taken seriously.

Traditionally, the American way has been to make English the national language—but to do so quietly, locally, without fuss. The Constitution is silent on language: the Founding Fathers had no need to leg-

**History teaches
a plain
lesson about
language and
governments:
there is almost
nothing the
government of
a free country
can do to force
its citizens to
use certain
languages in
preference to
others.**

islate that English be the official language of the country. It has always been taken for granted that English *is* the national language, and that one must learn English in order to make it in America.

To say that language has never been a major force in American history or politics, however, is not to say that politicians have always resisted linguistic jingoism. In 1753 Benjamin Franklin voiced his concern that German immigrants were not learning English: "Those [Germans] who come hither are generally the most ignorant Stupid Sort of their own Nation. . . they will soon so out number us, that all the advantages we have will not, in My Opinion, be able to preserve our language, and even our government will become precarious." Theodore Roosevelt articulated the unspoken American linguistic-melting-pot theory when he boomed, "We have room for but one language here, and that is the English language, for we intend to see that the crucible turns our people out as Americans,

of American nationality, and not as dwellers in a polyglot boarding house." And: "We must have but one flag. We must also have but one language. That must be the language of the Declaration of Independence, of Washington's Farewell address, of Lincoln's Gettysburg speech and second inaugural."

OFFICIAL ENGLISH

R'S linguistic tub-thumping long typified the tradition of American politics. That tradition began to change in the wake of the anything-goes attitudes and the celebration of cultural differences arising in the 1960s. A 1975 amendment to the Voting Rights Act of 1965 mandated the "bilingual ballot" under certain circumstances, notably when the voters of selected language groups reached five percent or more in a voting district. Bilingual

education became a byword of educational thinking during the 1960s. By the 1970s linguists had demonstrated convincingly—at least to other academics—that black English (today called African-American vernacular English or Ebonics) was not "bad" English but a different kind of authentic English with its own rules. Predictably, there have been scattered demands that black English be included in bilingual-education programs.

It was against this background that the movement to make English the official language of the country arose. In 1981 Senator S. I. Hayakawa, long a leading critic of bilingual education and bilingual ballots, introduced in the U.S. Senate a constitutional amendment that not only would have made English the official language but would have prohibited federal and state laws and regulations requiring the use of other languages. His English Language Amendment died in the Ninety-seventh Congress.

In 1983 the organization called U.S. English was founded by Hayakawa and John Tanton, a Michigan ophthalmologist. The primary purpose of the organization was to promote English as the official language of the United States. (The best background readings on America's "neolinguisticism" are the books *Hold Your Tongue*, by James Crawford, and *Language Loyalties*, edited by Crawford, both published in 1992.) Official English initiatives were passed by California in 1986, by Arkansas, Mississippi, North Carolina, North Dakota, and South Carolina in 1987, by Colorado, Florida, and Arizona in 1988, and by Alabama in 1990. The majorities voting for these initiatives were generally not insubstantial: California's, for example, passed by 73 percent.

It was probably inevitable that the Official English (or English Only—the two names are used almost interchangeably) movement would acquire a conservative, almost reactionary undertone in the 1990s. Official English is politically very incorrect. But its cofounder John Tanton brought with him strong liberal credentials. He had been active in the Sierra Club and Planned Parenthood, and in the 1970s served as the national president of Zero Population Growth. Early advisers of U.S. English resist ideological pigeonholing: they included Walter Annenberg, Jacques Barzun, Bruno Bettelheim, Alistair Cooke, Denton Cooley, Walter Cronkite, Angier Biddle Duke, George Gilder, Sidney Hook, Norman Podhoretz, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and Karl Shapiro. In 1987 U.S. English installed as its president Linda Chávez, a Hispanic who had been prominent in the Reagan Administration. A year later she resigned her position, citing "repugnant" and "anti-Hispanic" overtones in an internal memorandum written by Tanton. Tanton, too, resigned, and Walter Cronkite, describing the affair as "embarrassing," left the advisory board. One board member, Norman Cousins, defected in 1986, alluding to the "negative symbolic significance" of California's Official English initiative, Proposition 63. The current chairman of the board

and CEO of U.S. English is Mauro E. Mujica, who claims that the organization has 650,000 members.

The popular wisdom is that conservatives are pro and liberals con. True, conservatives such as George Will and William F. Buckley Jr. have written columns supporting Official English. But would anyone characterize as conservatives the present and past U.S. English board members Alistair Cooke, Walter Cronkite, and Norman Cousins? One of the strongest opponents of bilingual education is the Mexican-American writer Richard Rodríguez, best known for his eloquent autobiography, *Hunger for Memory* (1982). There is a strain of American liberalism that defines itself in nostalgic devotion to the melting pot.

For several years relevant bills awaited consideration in the U.S. House of Representatives. The Emerson Bill (H.R. 123), passed by the House last August, specifies English as the official language of government, and requires that the government "preserve and enhance" the official status of English. Exceptions are made for the teaching of foreign languages; for actions necessary for public health, international relations, foreign trade, and the protection of the rights of criminal defendants; and for the use of "terms of art" from languages other than English. It would, for example, stop the Internal Revenue Service from sending out income-tax forms and instructions in languages other than English, but it would not ban the use of foreign languages in census materials or documents dealing with national security. "*E Pluribus Unum*" can still appear on American money. U.S. English supports the bill.

What are the chances that some version of Official English will become federal law? Any language bill will face tough odds in the Senate, because some western senators have opposed English Only measures in the past for various reasons, among them a desire by Republicans not to alienate the growing number of Hispanic Republicans, most of



whom are uncomfortable with mandated monolingualism. Texas Governor George W. Bush, too, has forthrightly said that he would oppose any English Only proposals in his state. Several of the Republican candidates for President in 1996 (an interesting exception is Phil Gramm) endorsed versions of Official English, as has Newt Gingrich. While governor of Arkansas, Bill Clinton signed into law an English Only bill. As President, he has described his earlier action as a mistake.

Many issues intersect in the controversy over Official English: immigration (above all), the rights of minorities (Spanish-speaking minorities in particular), the pros and cons of bilingual education, tolerance, how best to educate the children of immigrants, and the place of cultural diversity in school curricula and in American society in general. The question that lies at the root of most of the uneasiness is this: Is America threatened by the preservation of languages other

than English? Will America, if it continues on its traditional path of benign linguistic neglect, go the way of Belgium, Canada, and Sri Lanka—three countries among many whose unity is gravely imperiled by language and ethnic conflicts?

LANGUAGE AND NATIONALITY



LANGUAGE and nationalism were not always so intimately intertwined. Never in the heyday of rule by sovereign was it a condition of employment that the

King be able to speak the language of his subjects. George I spoke no English and spent much of his time away from England, attempting to use the power of his kingship to shore up his German possessions. In the Middle Ages nationalism was not even part of the picture: one owed loyalty to a lord, a prince, a ruler, a family, a tribe, a church, a piece of land, but not to a nation and least of all to a nation as a language unit. The capital city of the Austrian Hapsburg empire was Vienna, its ruler a monarch with effective control of peoples of the most varied and incompatible ethnic-

MY DAUGHTERS IN NEW YORK

What streets, what taxis, transport them
over bridges & speed bumps—my daughters swift

in pursuit of union? What suitors amuse them, what mazes
of avenues tilt & confuse them as pleasure, that pinball,

goes bouncing off light posts & lands in a pothole,
only to pop up & roll in the gutter? What footloose new

freedoms allow them to plow through all stop signs,
careening at corners, hell-bent for the road to
blaze straight?

It's 10 P.M. in the boonies. My children, I'm thinking
you're thinking your children are waiting

for you to conceive them while you're in a snarl
with my sons-in-law-to-be who want also to be

amazing explorers beguiled by these reckless night rides
that may God willing give way to ten thousand
good mornings!

—JAMES REISS

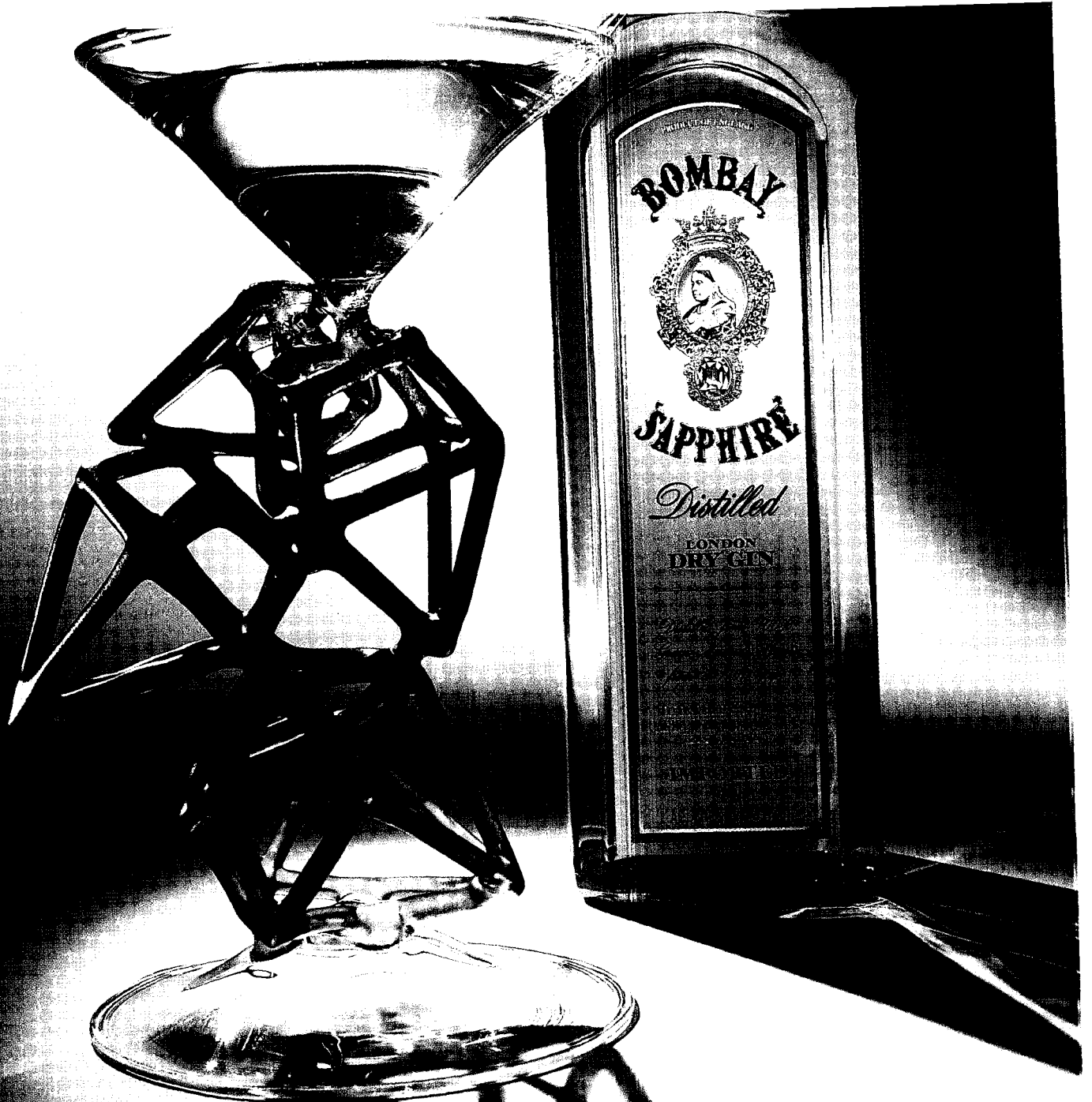
ities, and languages, throughout Central and Eastern Europe. The official language, and the lingua franca as well, was German. While it stood—and it stood for hundreds of years—the empire was an anachronistic relic of what for most of human history had been the normal relationship between country and language: none.

The marriage of language and nationalism goes back at least to Romanticism and specifically to Rousseau, who argued in his *Essay on the Origin of Languages* that language must develop before politics is possible and that language originally distinguished nations from one another. A little-remembered aim of the French Revolution—itsself the legacy of Rousseau—was to impose a national language on France, where regional languages such as Provençal, Breton, and Basque were still strong competitors against standard French, the French of the Ile de France. As late as 1789, when the Revolution began, half the population of the south of France, which spoke Provençal, did not understand French. A century earlier the playwright Racine said that he had had to resort to Spanish and Italian to make himself understood in the southern French town of Uzès. After the Revolution nationhood itself became aligned with language.

In 1846 Jacob Grimm, one of the Brothers Grimm of fairy-tale fame but better known in the linguistic establishment as a forerunner of modern comparative and historical linguists, said that “a nation is the totality of people who speak the same language.” After midcentury, language was invoked more than any other single criterion to define nationality. Language as a political force helped to bring about the unification of Italy and of Germany and the secession of Norway from its union with Sweden in 1905. Arnold Toynbee observed—unhappily—soon after the First World War that “the growing consciousness of Nationality had attached itself neither to traditional frontiers nor to new geographical associations but almost exclusively to mother tongues.”

The crowning triumph of the new desideratum was the Treaty of Versailles, in 1919, when the allied victors of the First World War began redrawing the map of Central and Eastern Europe according to nationality as best they could. The magic word was “self-determination,” and none of Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points mentioned the word “language” at all. Self-determination was thought of as being related to “nationality,” which today we would be more likely to call “ethnicity”; but language was simpler to identify than nationality or ethnicity. When it came to drawing the boundary lines of various countries—Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Romania, Hungary, Albania, Bulgaria, Poland—it was principally language that guided the draftsman’s hand. (The main exceptions were Alsace-Lorraine, South Tyrol, and the German-speaking parts of Bohemia and Moravia.) Almost by default language became the defining characteristic of nationality.

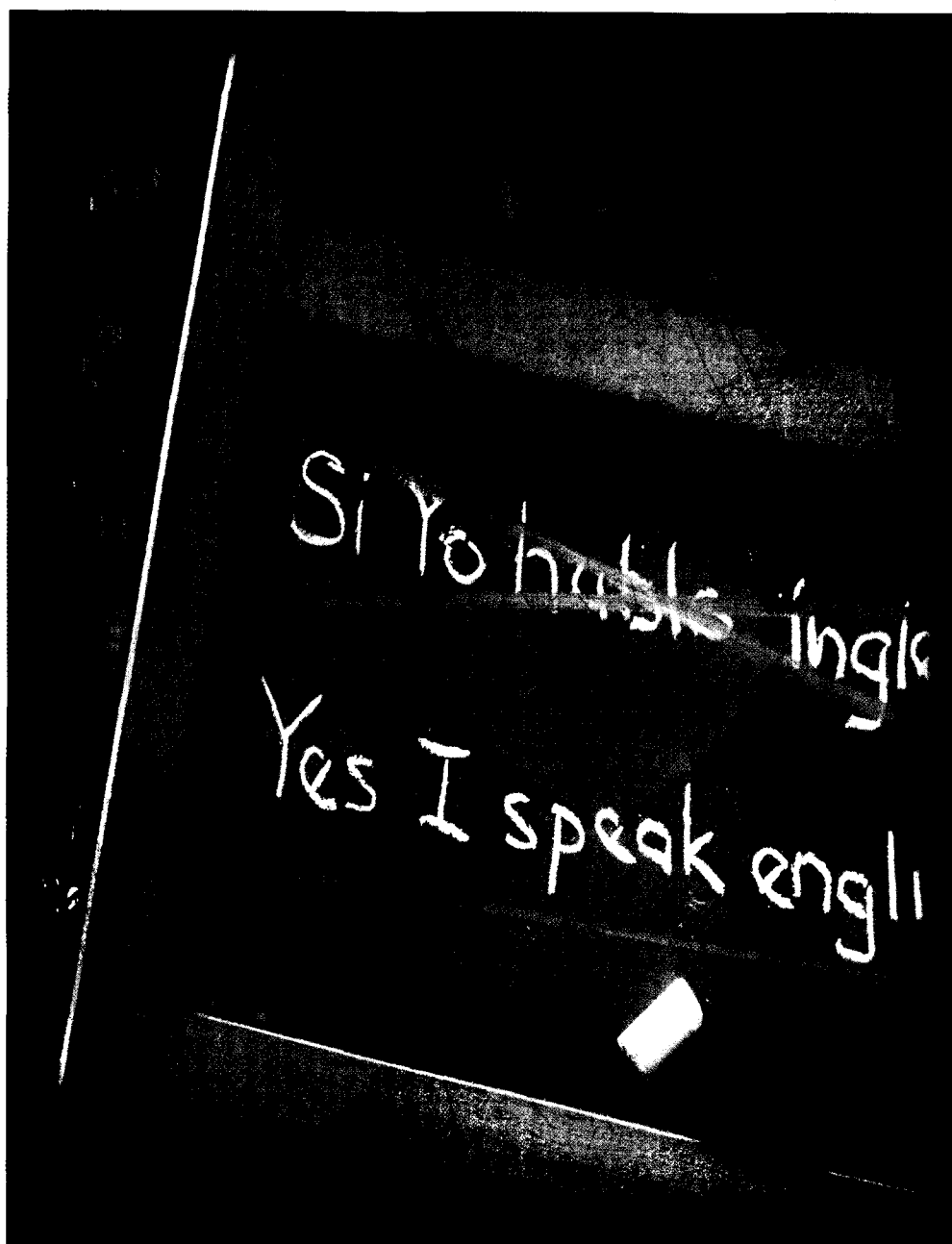
And so it remains today. In much of the world, ethnic uni-



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ty and cultural identification are routinely defined by language. To be Arab is to speak Arabic. Bengali identity is based on language in spite of the division of Bengali-speakers between Hindu India and Muslim Bangladesh. When eastern Pakistan seceded from greater Pakistan in 1971, it named itself Bangladesh: *desa* means “country”; *bangla* means not the Bengali people or the Bengali territory but the Bengali language.

Scratch most nationalist movements and you find a linguistic grievance. The demands for independence of the Baltic states (Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia) were intimately bound up with fears for the loss of their respective languages and cultures in a sea of Russianness. In Belgium the war between French and Flemish threatens an already weakly fused country. The present atmosphere of Belgium is dark and anxious, costive; the metaphor of divorce is a staple of private and public discourse. The lines of terrorism in Sri Lan-

ka are drawn between Tamil Hindus and Sinhalese Buddhists—and also between the Tamil and Sinhalese languages. Worship of the French language fortifies the movement for an independent Quebec. Whether a united Canada will survive into the twenty-first century is a question too close to call. Much of the anxiety about language in the United States is probably fueled by the “Quebec problem”: unlike Belgium, which is a small European country, or Sri Lanka, which is halfway around the world, Canada is our close neighbor.

Language is a convenient surrogate for nonlinguistic claims that are often awkward to articulate, for they amount to a demand for more political and economic power. Militant Sikhs in India call for a state of their own: Khalistan (“Land of the Pure” in Punjabi). They frequently couch this as a demand for a linguistic state, which has a certain simplicity about it, a clarity of motive—justice, even, because states in India are normally linguistic states. But the Sikh demands blend religion, economics, lan-

guage, and retribution for sins both punished and unpunished in a country where old sins cast long shadows.

Language is an explosive issue in the countries of the former Soviet Union. The language conflict in Estonia has been especially bitter. Ethnic Russians make up almost a third of Estonia’s population, and most of them do not speak or read Estonian, although Russians have lived in Estonia for more than a generation. Estonia has passed legislation requiring knowledge of the Estonian language as a condition of citizenship. Nationalist groups in independent Lithuania sought restrictions on the use of Polish—again, old sins, long shadows.

In 1995 protests erupted in Moldova, formerly the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, over language and the teaching of Moldovan history. Was Moldovan history a part of Romanian history or of Soviet history? Was Moldova’s language Romanian? Moldovan—earlier called Molda-

vian—is Romanian, just as American English and British English are both English. But in the days of the Moldavian SSR, Moscow insisted that the two languages were different, and in a piece of linguistic nonsense required Moldavian to be written in the Cyrillic alphabet to strengthen the case that it was not Romanian.

The official language of Yugoslavia was Serbo-Croatian, which was never so much a language as a political accommodation. The Serbian and Croatian languages are mutually intelligible. Serbian is written in the Cyrillic alphabet, is identified with the Eastern Orthodox branch of the Catholic Church, and borrows its high-culture words from the east—from Russian and Old Church Slavic. Croatian is written in the Roman alphabet, is identified with Roman Catholicism, and borrows its high-culture words from the west—from German, for example, and Latin. One of the first things the newly autonomous Republic of Serbia did, in 1991, was to pass a law decreeing Serbian in the Cyrillic alphabet the official language of the country. With Croatia divorced from Serbia, the Croatian and Serbian languages are diverging more and more. Serbo-Croatian has now passed into history, a language-museum relic from the brief period when Serbs and Croats called themselves Yugoslavs and pretended to like each other.

Slovakia, relieved now of the need to accommodate to Czech cosmopolitan sensibilities, has passed a law making Slovak its official language. (Czech is to Slovak pretty much as Croatian is to Serbian.) Doctors in state hospitals must speak to patients in Slovak, even if another language would aid diagnosis and treatment. Some 600,000 Slovaks—more than 10 percent of the population—are ethnically Hungarian. Even staff meetings in Hungarian-language schools must be in Slovak. (The government dropped a stipulation that church weddings be conducted in Slovak after heavy opposition from the Roman Catholic Church.) Language inspectors are told to weed out “all sins perpetrated on the regular Slovak language.” Tensions between Slovaks and Hungarians, who had been getting along, have begun to arise.

The twentieth century is ending as it began—with trouble in the Balkans and with nationalist tensions flaring up in other parts of the globe. (Toward the end of his life Bismarck predicted that “some damn fool thing in the Balkans” would ignite the next war.) Language isn’t always part of the problem. But it usually is.

UNIQUE OTHERNESS

Is there no hope for language tolerance? Some countries manage to maintain their unity in the face of multilingualism. Examples are Finland, with a Swedish minority, and a number of African and Southeast Asian countries. Two others could not be more unlike as countries go: Switzerland and India.

German, French, Italian, and Romansh are the languages of Switzerland. The first three can be and are used for official purposes; all four are designated “national” languages. Switzerland is politically almost hyperstable. It has language problems (Romansh is losing ground), but they are not major, and they are never allowed to threaten national unity.

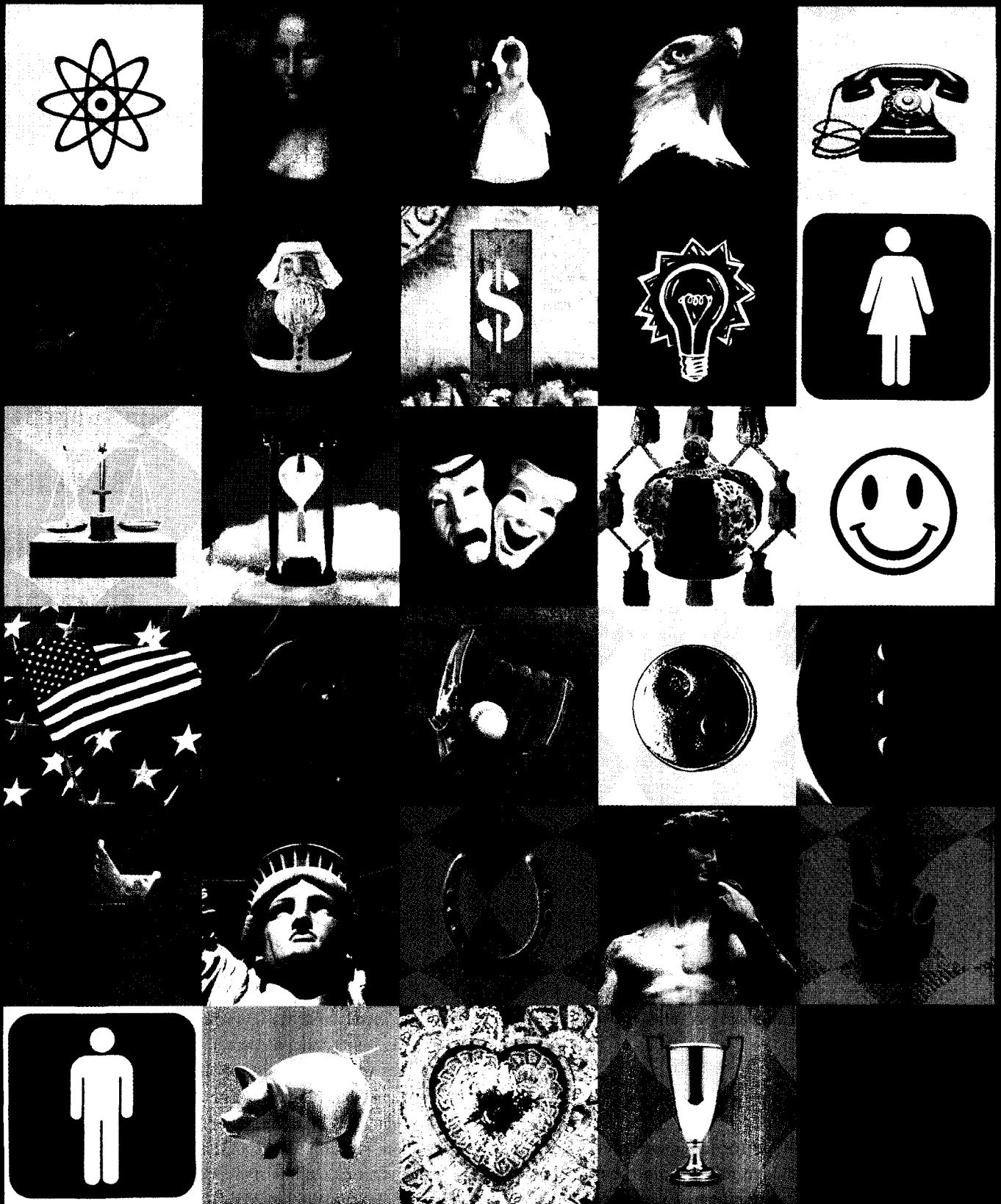
Contrary to public perception, India gets along pretty well with a host of different languages. The Indian constitution officially recognizes nineteen languages, English among them. Hindi is specified in the constitution as the national language of India, but that is a pious postcolonial fiction: outside the Hindi-speaking northern heartland of India, people don’t want to learn it. English functions more nearly than Hindi as India’s lingua franca.

From 1947, when India obtained its independence from the British, until the 1960s blood ran in the streets and people died because of language. Hindi absolutists wanted to force Hindi on the entire country, which would have split India between north and south and opened up other fracture lines as well. For as long as possible Jawaharlal Nehru, independent India’s first Prime Minister, resisted nationalist demands to redraw the capricious state boundaries of British India according to language. By the time he capitulated, the country had gained a precious decade to prove its viability as a union.

Why is it that India preserves its unity with not just two languages to contend with, as Belgium, Canada, and Sri Lanka have, but nineteen? The answer is that India, like Switzerland, has a strong national identity. The two countries share something big and almost mystical that holds each together in a union transcending language. That something I call “unique otherness.”

The Swiss have what the political scientist Karl Deutsch called “learned habits, preferences, symbols, memories, and patterns of landholding”: customs, cultural traditions, and

**We are not
even close to
the danger
point. I suggest
that we relax
and luxuriate
in our linguistic
richness and
our traditional
tolerance of
language
differences.
Language does
not threaten
American unity.**



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political institutions that bind them closer to one another than to people of France, Germany, or Italy living just across the border and speaking the same language. There is Switzerland's traditional neutrality, its system of universal military training (the "citizen army"), its consensual allegiance to a strong Swiss franc—and fondue, yodeling, skiing, and mountains. Set against all this, the fact that Switzerland has four languages doesn't even approach the threshold of becoming a threat.

As for India, what Vincent Smith, in the *Oxford History of India*, calls its "deep underlying fundamental unity" resides in institutions and beliefs such as caste, cow worship, sacred places, and much more. Consider *dharma*, *karma*, and *maya*, the three root convictions of Hinduism; India's historical epics; Gandhi; *ahimsa* (nonviolence); vegetarianism; a distinctive cuisine and way of eating; marriage customs; a shared past; and what the Indologist Ainslie Embree calls "Brahmanical ideology." In other words, "We are Indian; we are different."

Belgium and Canada have never managed to forge a stable national identity; Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia never did either. Unique otherness immunizes countries against linguistic destabilization. Even Switzerland and especially India have problems; in any country with as many different languages as India has, language will never *not* be a problem. However, it is one thing to have a major illness with a bleak prognosis; it is another to have a condition that is irritating and occasionally painful but not life-threatening.

History teaches a plain lesson about language and governments: there is almost nothing the government of a free country can do to change language usage and practice significantly, to force its citizens to use certain languages in preference to others, and to discourage people from speaking a language they wish to continue to speak. (The rebirth of Hebrew in Palestine and Israel's successful mandate that Hebrew be spoken and written by Israelis is a unique event in the annals of language history.) Quebec has since the 1970s passed an array of laws giving French a virtual monopoly in the province. One consequence—unintended, one wishes to believe—of these laws is that last year kosher products imported for Passover were kept off the shelves, because the packages were not labeled in French. Wise governments keep their hands off language to the extent that it is politically possible to do so.

We like to believe that to pass a law is to change behavior; but passing laws about language, in a free society, almost never changes attitudes or behavior. Gaelic (Irish) is living out a slow, inexorable decline in Ireland despite enormous government support of every possible kind since Ireland gained its independence from Britain. The Welsh language, in contrast, is alive today in Wales in spite of heavy discrimination during its history. Three out of four people in the northern and western counties of Gwynedd and Dyfed speak Welsh.

I said earlier that language is a convenient surrogate for other national problems. Official English obviously has a lot to do with concern about immigration, perhaps especially Hispanic immigration. America may be threatened by immigration; I don't know. But America is not threatened by language.

The usual arguments made by academics against Official English are commonsensical. Who needs a law when, according to the 1990 census, 94 percent of American residents speak English anyway? (Mauro E. Mujica, the chairman of U.S. English, cites a higher figure: 97 percent.) Not many of today's immigrants will see their first language survive into the second generation. This is in fact the common lament of first-generation immigrants: their children are not learning their language and are losing the culture of their parents. Spanish is hardly a threat to English, in spite of isolated (and easily visible) cases such as Miami, New York City, and pockets of the Southwest and southern California. The everyday language of south Texas is Spanish, and yet south Texas is not about to secede from America.

But empirical, calm arguments don't engage the real issue: language is a symbol, an icon. Nobody who favors a constitutional ban against flag burning will ever be persuaded by the argument that the flag is, after all, just a "piece of cloth." A draft card in the 1960s was never merely a piece of paper. Neither is a marriage license.

Language, as one linguist has said, is "not primarily a means of communication but a means of communion." Romanticism exalted language, made it mystical, sublime—a bond of national identity. At the same time, Romanticism created a monster: it made of language a means for destroying a country.

America has that unique otherness of which I spoke. In spite of all our racial divisions and economic unfairness, we have the frontier tradition, respect for the individual, and opportunity; we have our love affair with the automobile; we have in our history a civil war that freed the slaves and was fought with valor; and we have sports, hot dogs, hamburgers, and milk shakes—things big and small, noble and petty, important and trifling. "We are Americans; we are different."

If I'm wrong, then the great American experiment will fail—not because of language but because it no longer means anything to be an American; because we have forfeited that "willingness of the heart" that F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote was America; because we are no longer joined by Lincoln's "mystic chords of memory."

We are not even close to the danger point. I suggest that we relax and luxuriate in our linguistic richness and our traditional tolerance of language differences. Language does not threaten American unity. Benign neglect is a good policy for any country when it comes to language, and it's a good policy for America. ☸



"Go see a kibbutz.
That's how it all started."



"Actually he's off by a
few thousand years.
Start at the Western Wall."



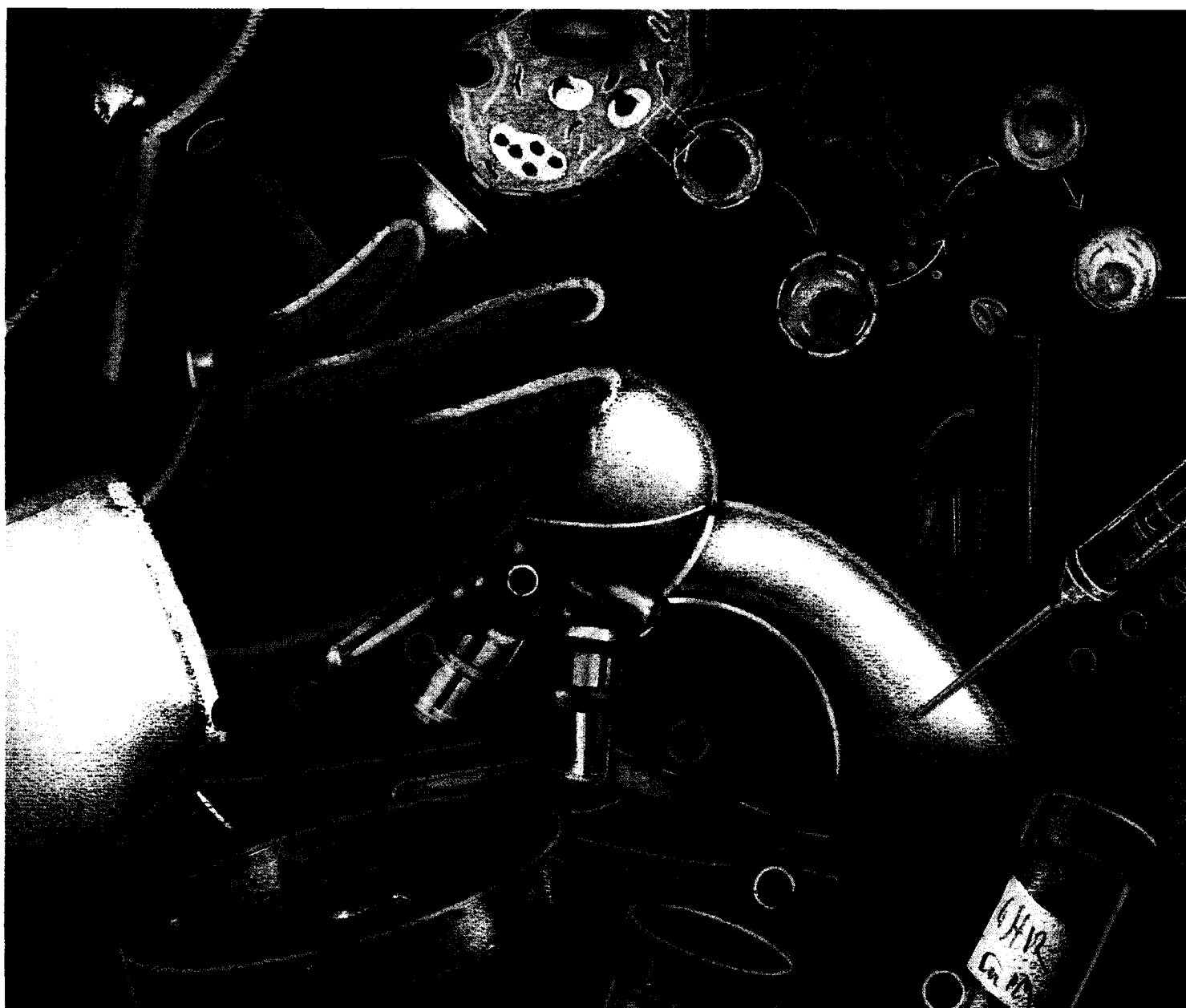
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Vaccinating Against Cancer

by
STEPHEN S. HALL

IN December of 1982 a young German physician named Alexander Knuth climbed into his car and set off on the three-and-a-half-hour drive from Frankfurt to Brussels. Carefully tucked into his shirt pocket, so that his body heat would keep it warm, was a flat plastic flask known as a cell-culture bottle. The flask contained cancer cells isolated from one of Knuth's patients, a German postal worker we will call Frau H., who at the time was losing ground to a rapidly advancing form of skin cancer and was not expected to live much longer.

Several months later Knuth sent to Brussels, in a container packed in dry ice, a small quantity of Frau H.'s white blood cells—the portion of blood that includes the most potent cells and molecules of the immune system. In those two



For more than a century researchers have hoped to enlist the body's immune system in the fight against cancer, but the markers that identify a tumor as alien long eluded them. Now, by a combination of accident and relentless logic, several researchers are closing in on ways to force tumors to show their true colors to the body's immune system.

consignments were the cellular protagonists in one of the deepest, most complex, and often most heartrending dramas in human biology—the battle between the immune system and cancer. Those particular cells would figure in a marvelous scientific saga that more than a decade later has given a new twist to a very old form of medicine: vaccination

against a disease *after* it has been diagnosed in the patient.

Working in a two-person laboratory at the University of Mainz, Knuth had noticed that Frau H.'s white blood cells, and by implication her immune system, seemed to recognize her cancer cells with exquisite specificity. No tools existed at the time, however, to record the full richness of the relationship between white blood cells and cancer cells—a relationship typified by behaviors we usually ascribe to psychology: recognition, evasion, tolerance, even mortal violence. Knuth didn't know exactly what those immune cells recognized. He did, however, know of a researcher who had painstakingly been developing the technology to help him figure it out.

For more than a century doctors have nourished the hope of enlisting the immune system in the battle against can-

cer—specifically, of manipulating the immune system so that it will track down and eliminate tumors and the spreading seeds of malignancy, known as metastases, in much the way it tracks down and eliminates viruses and other pathogens. Crucial to this effort has been the belief that tumors display antigens—distinct molecular landmarks on their cell surfaces—that betray the malignant nature of the cell within and might therefore incite an immune response. For many years researchers have presumed that tumor antigens useful for a vaccine strategy exist, but these have stubbornly eluded scientific capture. Although a long history of anecdotal evidence has suggested that the immune system has in some rare instances caused certain cancers to disappear on their own (melanoma and kidney cancer among them), attempts to translate that evidence into useful therapies have produced chiefly disappointment.

Cancer remains little affected by immunological approaches—indeed, by most of the current kinds of treatment, with the possible exception of surgery. About 1.4 million Americans are found to have cancer each year, and nearly half these cases prove to be incurable, usually because the disease has spread too far by the time of diagnosis. According to George Canellos, a professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School, about 50 percent of people with cancer survive for five years after diagnosis and are considered cured, but the vast majority of those cures are achieved with surgery. Only about 10 percent of patients are cured by radiation alone, and only five percent by the combination of radiation and chemotherapy. Except in childhood cancers and a few adult malignancies, chemotherapy alone rarely produces a five-year remission.

These sobering statistics fall within the shadow of a larger, and unfortunate, public perception that was shaped in part by Richard Nixon's declaration of war on cancer in 1971. The inevitable implication of Nixon's declaration was that cancer, presented for the sake of political convenience as a single enemy, might finally be conquered by a single cure. If any lesson has become clear in the past twenty-six years, it is that cancers arise from a multitude of circumstances, in many kinds of cells, by way of a large number of molecular pathways, and that they respond to many different treatments. Another powerful message is that once a cancer spreads, neither surgery nor radiation, and only occasionally chemotherapy, can turn the tide—which is why enlisting the help of the immune system remains such an attractive alternative. "I think it's the only chance we really have to control systemic disease," says Ronald Levy, an oncologist and cancer researcher at Stanford University. "Because the real problem in cancer is metastatic disease, micrometastatic disease. It's the reason we don't cure people now."

Alexander Knuth's initial journey to Brussels might have been viewed—indeed, was viewed by some of his German colleagues—as the latest in a long succession of fool's errands in the field of tumor immunology. Once in Brussels, Knuth

passed on Frau H.'s cancer cells to Thierry Boon, a Flemish-born, French-speaking, American-trained medical-school dropout who headed a large laboratory at the Catholic University of Louvain, funded by the Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research. Boon had become fascinated—almost against his will, to hear him tell it—with the immunology of cancer, which, after decades of search for those elusive antigens, was in considerable disrepute around the time his interest was piqued. Boon, Knuth, and their colleagues in Brussels and Frankfurt set out to understand the relationship at the molecular level between the immune system and cancer cells—what the immune system perceives and in what context, how it is able to distinguish a cancer cell from a healthy cell, and how the tumor responds to intense and potentially lethal scrutiny.

Frau H.

SHE was a dark-haired, somewhat plump woman, thirty-seven years old and the mother of two teenagers, who intensely disliked her job sorting mail during the early-morning shift at the local post office in a small town just southwest of Frankfurt. The tragedy that ultimately led to Frau H.'s exalted status in the world of tumor immunology announced itself in a whisper of minor symptoms: fatigue, vague abdominal distress, cramps, pallor. As her health declined, she spent entire days lying in bed. Finally, after Frau H. consulted her regular physician in March of 1982, doctors at her community hospital suspected she had developed several large cysts, probably cancerous in origin, and sent her to the Department of Gynecology at the nearby University of Mainz for surgery. The "cysts" turned out to be three tumors, one in her ovary and two in her adrenals; the latter two were later estimated by her doctors to be about the size of grapefruits.

Cancer cells usually betray the stamp of the tissue where they originated, and Frau H.'s tumors had actually metastasized from another site. Her doctors never located the original, or primary, tumor, but laboratory tests eventually confirmed that all the trouble started in a pigmented cell, or melanocyte, in the skin. Frau H., in fact, had the deadly skin cancer known as melanoma—a disease that will strike some 40,000 Americans this year, and one whose incidence has increased radically throughout the world in recent years, owing to sunbathing and, perhaps, a thinning ozone layer. Frau H.'s melanoma was especially aggressive. At the time of her second surgery doctors discovered another bad omen: the cancer, which had already spread to an ovary and the adrenals, now had metastasized to a lymph node beneath her right armpit.

Frau H.'s surgeons referred their patient to the University of Mainz's new oncology clinic. This was headed by the thirty-four-year-old Knuth, who had returned to Germany the previous year after a three-year research fellowship at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, in New York City. Tall and rail-thin, with a decisive and briskly competent manner,

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Knuth considered himself a product of the United States despite his Germanic upbringing in Hamburg. He had learned excellent English during that stint in New York and a previous one as a high school foreign-exchange student in Berkeley, California. He had worked on an experimental melanoma vaccine at Sloan-Kettering; fresh in his memory was a patient known as "A.V." who in 1976 experienced a rare and remarkable event. Injection of cells from his own tumor as a vaccine had triggered an immune response that helped A.V. to recover from an extensive metastatic melanoma. He is still alive today. Knuth helped to show that this patient made immune cells that recognized and attacked his melanoma.

Even in desperate cases, however, treatment begins with the conventional. "We put [Frau H.] on chemotherapy, first choice," Knuth told me in November of 1994, when I visited him at his office at the Krankenhaus Nordwest, a hospital in Frankfurt, "because we needed to do something that was an established therapy at the time." When the chemotherapy provided no benefit over the course of a year, Knuth moved on to a second strategy. He decided to repeat the crude tumor-vaccine experiment from Sloan-Kettering: he took chunks of Frau H.'s excised tumor, broke them down into component melanoma cells, and started growing these cells in laboratory culture flasks. This cell line (the one he drove to Brussels), christened with the name MZ2, was destined to become one of the most productive in recent cancer research.

The tumor is only one partner in the tango of melanoma; the other is the immune system. Knuth turned his attention to the relationship between a subset of immune cells known as cytolytic ("cell-killing") T lymphocytes and Frau H.'s melanoma cells. As in team sports, the immune response has its role players and its stars, and T lymphocytes are stars. T cells retain a memory for the viral and bacterial antigens they find, and they are unusually effective killers. They can even identify cells within which a virus or a cancer lurks. The German researchers peering into their lab dishes saw, to their surprise, that a small number of Frau H.'s cytolytic T lymphocytes not only recognized the melanoma cells from her body

but killed them in the test tube. This discovery made Knuth "antsy," he says, to try to reinforce this response with a tumor vaccine. This would require altering, or mutagenizing, her cancer cells. At the suggestion of Lloyd Old, his former mentor in New York, Knuth got in touch with Thierry Boon.

After receiving Frau H.'s cancer cells Boon exposed them to powerful chemicals to create mutations. He knew that when mutated tumor cells are injected back into the body, sometimes the unmutated tumor suddenly becomes "visible" to the immune system and succumbs to an attack by T cells. Boon had demonstrated this before, but only in mice, never in human beings. He and Knuth almost didn't get the chance with Frau H. "The chemotherapy was not working," Knuth said. "And since the mass in the lymph node in the armpit was growing so fast, we then asked the surgeons to remove it, because it appeared at the time that that was just a single, isolated, additional site." It was not. Frau H.'s disease had advanced much further than the doctors had suspected: it had spread not only to her adrenals, ovaries, and lymph nodes but also to other organs. In July of 1983 surgeons removed one cancerous kidney and her spleen, but did not manage to cut out all the affected tissue (did not achieve, in Knuth's words, "clean surgical margins"). "It was questionable at that time if she was really free of disease," he said. "We definitely thought she would die. With such a vastly metastatic tumor, it would be very unusual that someone didn't die." After one final course of chemotherapy, Knuth initiated injections of the vaccine in

Alexander Knuth's journey to Brussels with a flask of cancer cells in his pocket was viewed by some of his colleagues as the latest in a long series of fool's errands in the field of tumor immunology.



February of 1984. Roughly 100 million cancer cells derived from Frau H.'s own tumor, altered by Boon's chemically induced mutations and then killed by irradiation shortly before each treatment, were injected at intervals of four to six weeks.

The dry data of medical records conceals many an unexpected plot twist. In Frau H.'s case the "key situation," according to Knuth, occurred soon after the vaccinations began, when the German doctors detected yet another tumor mass, a three-centimeter growth; it appeared, not surprisingly, in the region of the kidneys and spleen, where surgeons feared they had not succeeded in removing all the cancerous tissue. Monitoring the mass with ultrasound and CT scans, the doctors watched with apprehension as it grew to a diameter of eight centimeters, about the size of a large plum. "I remember it very well," Knuth told me, "because I wanted the surgeon to operate on her in the summertime. It was August, and he wanted to go on vacation, and he couldn't do it before his vacation. She was almost scheduled, and then it didn't work for time reasons. So we continued to give her the vaccination. And during the time that the surgeon was away, that tumor started to shrink. It later disappeared, and the surgery was never performed."

That was in September of 1984, and that tumor was the last anyone saw of Frau H.'s cancer; it has never come back. Depending on one's point of view, Frau H. was cured by the surgery and vaccine, or somehow managed to cure herself of a highly malignant and undoubtedly terminal cancer. Passing as if through a revolving door from medical miracle back to quotidian banality, Frau H. walked out of the hospital and back to sorting mail in a provincial post office.

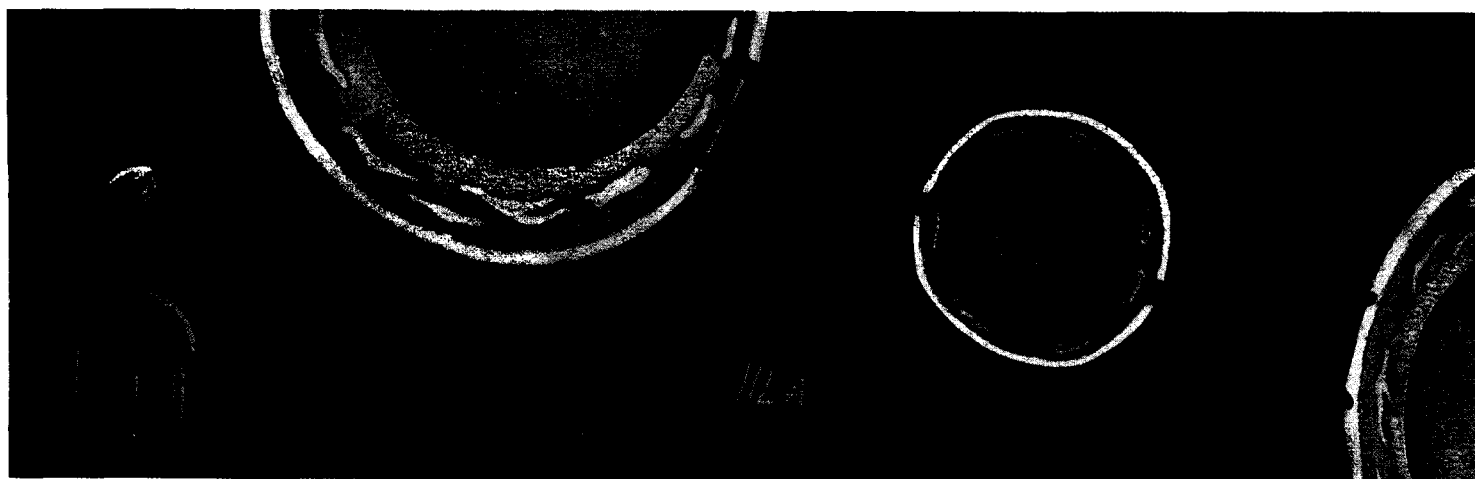
I first heard a detailed account of Frau H.'s remarkable remission from Thierry Boon. He recalled how Knuth had injected Frau H. in the spring of 1984, how her condition waxed and waned over the following months, how she began to improve steadily. "Now, that was in the fall of 1984," Boon told me in June of 1994, sitting under a little gazebo atop one of the hills that overlook Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, on Long Island, which had invited him to visit and

to give a symposium talk. "And then, you know, we continued injecting her every three months, and then every six months, and now I think it's more irregularly. But she is alive and tumor-free." He paused, mustering irony. "We'll never know if our injections have anything to do with it."

If truth be told, incidents like Frau H.'s miraculous cure (and popular accounts of them) are eyesores on the landscape of medical progress: with the subtlety of billboards they promise much and yet rarely deliver scientific information that will ultimately benefit other patients. Frau H.'s remarkable case history has never been published in the medical literature, primarily because her German doctors failed—on purpose and after painful deliberation—to gather one crucial piece of evidence. When that last tumor began to shrink, in the fall of 1984, Knuth wrestled with the kind of dilemma that illustrates how good medical care and good research often work at cross purposes. He knew they could make a convincing case that the vaccine had worked if they performed a biopsy on the shrinking tumor and confirmed that it was indeed a recurrence of the original cancer. He also knew that in snipping away even a small piece of malignant tissue they might endanger Frau H. by accidentally disseminating tumor cells and promoting the spread of what had already proved itself to be a highly malignant cancer. They chose not to tamper with the shrinking tumor. Thus they were left with one very pleasing anecdote and no proof that their improvised vaccine had made a difference.

Boon, Knuth, and their colleagues nonetheless achieved one scientific triumph. Using Frau H.'s T cells and cancer cells, they uncovered the first T-cell-specific tumor antigen in human beings—that is, the first marker recognized by T cells that appears on cancerous but not normal human cells. This discovery, first reported in the journal *Science* in 1991, and the techniques that made it possible, have opened the gates to a stampede of research into the reinvigorated field of tumor immunology, with the result that physicians have begun to choose patients likely to respond to several highly specific experimental cancer vaccines. It is still early in the

Artist's drawings in this article of cellular activity are based on technical illustrations by Dmitry Schidlovsky and Ian Worpole, *Scientific American*



story, with no guarantees of success, but there are preliminary hints that the vaccines may be useful in the treatment of melanoma and perhaps other, commoner malignancies.

The Accidental Immunologist

I MUST tell you," Thierry Boon said when I visited him several years ago in his Brussels laboratory, "I'm by training a molecular geneticist. I'm not an M.D. I'm not an immunologist. And I was certainly not a tumor immunologist to start with. I stumbled into this whole thing."

"Stumbled" seems far too blundering to describe anything Boon (pronounced "Bone") might do. Tall, thin, elegantly dressed, and charmingly outspoken, Boon has a close-cropped graying beard, dark eyebrows, and a long and slightly hooked nose. He wears his two predominant attitudes, modesty and arrogance, like a reversible coat. "I really grew up on this principle of molecular biologists—you know, we are intelligent, and the less we know of what other people are doing the better," he told me, confessing in almost the same breath an unfamiliarity with the literature in tumor immunology and adding with an apologetic shake of the head, "I am particularly illiterate." He is also something of a scientific loner—one of those increasingly rare researchers, manifestly intelligent and sufficiently self-confident, who can thrive outside the scientific mainstream.

Born in 1944, Boon grew up in the great university town of Louvain, about ten miles northeast of Brussels. In the sixteenth century Mercator and Vesalius walked the city's narrow, curving streets, one reconfiguring the cartography of the planet and the other the cartography of the body. Boon's mother came from a French-speaking background, and his father, who for many years was the chief executive at a Belgian brewery, from a Flemish one. "I did my secondary studies in Flemish," Boon told me, "because by the time I got to secondary school, it was already forbidden to have a French-speaking secondary school. You know, we have our tribal problems here. Fifty years ago, if you wanted to climb in society, you had to learn French." His father would have preferred that he pursue a career in business—"money and all that"—but he chose research instead.

When he decided to study biology at the Catholic University of Louvain, he received a shrewd bit of counsel from a friend of his father's: study medicine, because the faculty was better. The source of the advice was Christian de Duve, a biochemist who in 1974 won a Nobel Prize for work on the internal organization of the cell. Boon studied medicine for three years, just long enough to get turned off by the prospect of clinical practice and to get excited about the kind of research he was doing in De Duve's laboratory.

He decided to quit medical school and pursue basic research. In 1965, at the age of twenty, Boon landed a position as

a graduate student at Rockefeller University, in New York. After spending two years in his room studying mathematics and physics, he arrived in the laboratory of one of the central figures in the early history of molecular biology, Norton Zinder.

"Before he worked for me," Zinder recalled recently, "he went and read all my reprints and told me which ones were wrong." Boon spent six years at Rockefeller, and was by his own appraisal not a very good colleague, "not particularly friendly or helpful, because I wanted to work all the time." His research was narrowly focused on viruses that prey upon bacteria. But the philosophy of the research—reductionist, rigorous, supremely confident in the power of genetics—gave him an approach that would prove essential in solving longstanding puzzles in tumor immunology. Boon, like Knuth, considers himself "a child of the States intellectually," but more than that he brought a powerful reductionist approach to a scientific problem that had stymied others for decades: "If I had now to drop every semblance of modesty and say why we were successful in doing what we did, it was really two points. First, as has been done in almost every area of modern biology, we introduced genetics into tumor immunology. And second, by illiteracy and also by psychology I would say, I've never listened to or trusted one bit of what the tumor immunologists were saying. We believed only what we saw ourselves." Zinder calls Boon's approach to science "infinitely, scrupulously detailed and analytic."

When Jacques Monod, the brilliant French molecular biologist, gave a seminar at Rockefeller in the early 1970s, he visited Zinder's lab and heard about Boon's work. He invited Boon, who was finishing his Ph.D., to join the staff of the Pasteur Institute, in Paris. But Monod became the director of the institute in 1971 and had little time for laboratory inquiry, so Boon transferred to the lab of François Jacob. Jacob, who had shared a Nobel with Monod for their hypothesis about how genes are turned on and off in normal cell physiology, was focusing on the genetic and molecular processes that orchestrate the orderly development of a single fertilized cell into the more specialized cells and tissues of a mature organism. Against Jacob's advice—yet another example, Boon admits, of "getting advice from first-rate people and never following it"—he decided to study this process in mice. "And there was a tumor," Boon remembers, "a very strange type of tumor . . ."

"I Thought I Would Faint"

TERATOCARCINOMA is a cancer that derives its name from the Greek word *terat*, meaning "monster." It is a grotesque aberration of normal embryological development. Tumors can arise during the earliest stages of embryological development in many animals, including human beings, and usually result in spontaneous abortion. The genetic wiring has short-circuited in the midst of the process that forms different, specialized tissues; as a result, the tu-



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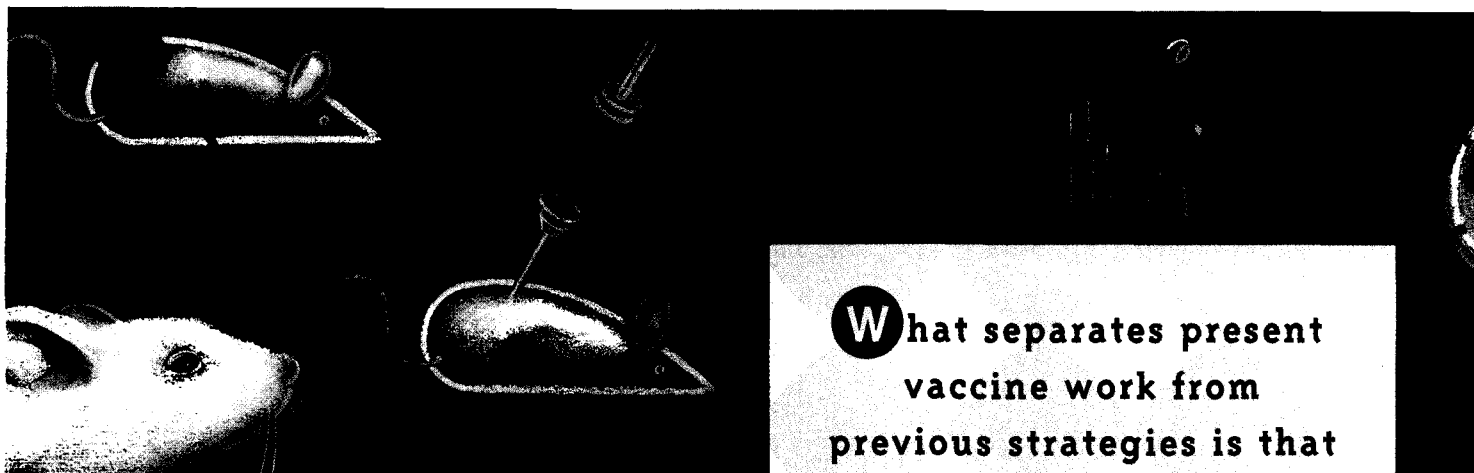
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mor gets diverted to a particular genetic pathway and in essence repeats the same anatomical phrase over and over again. Hence these tumors have been known to generate the most peculiar special effects: teeth, hair, bone, muscle, cartilage, almost any kind of tissue.

For many years researchers tinkered with these tumors and then transplanted them into mice as a way of studying the process of normal embryological development. Boon and a colleague, Odile Kellermann, hoped to tease out details about the genetic blueprint that governs the embryological development of specialized tissues by creating mutations in the tumors and seeing what happened.

Their first experiments produced a surprise. Beginning in 1972 they exposed teratocarcinoma cells to a very strong chemical agent that caused mutations, and then injected the mutated cancer cells into mice to see if there was a genetic pattern to the weird variations that grew out of the tumor; as a control they injected other mice with unmutated teratocarcinoma cells. The control animals almost always developed rampaging cancers, but in roughly 30 percent of the experimental animals the mutated cancer cells never took hold. As a geneticist, Boon realized he had fiddled with the genes of the tumor cells in an interesting and possibly important way. Quite by accident he had created a mutation in cancer cells that genetically changed them so that they were no longer viable as cancers.

At that point Boon knew nothing about cancer, but he felt impelled to understand why the mutated tumor cells no longer formed tumors. The short answer, Boon's group learned, was that the researchers had not altered the tumor's malignant traits but had instead marked the cancer cells with a badge of mutation, so that the cells were suddenly distinguishable to the mouse immune system—somewhat like an alien organ that might be rejected following transplant surgery. Boon and Kellermann had created, it turned out, man-made tumor antigens. To pull the plug genetically on a malignancy and prevent it from even appearing was pretty unusual, even in inbred mice. Boon knew at least that much,

What separates present vaccine work from previous strategies is that it has successfully tackled the very substantial problem of explaining on the molecular level how an immune response occurs.

although not much more. Sometimes, however, ignorance can be a scientist's greatest ally. What Boon learned afterward was that the field of tumor immunology was "an absolute morass." He had committed himself to what he calls the "untouchables of immunology."

That might overstate the disrepute in which tumor immunology was held in the 1970s. But it would be fair to say that it was a field associated with a lot of noise and but little practical progress. Georges Mathé, a flamboyant French hematologist, had stunned the medical community in 1969 by claiming that children with leukemia could experience a prolonged remission with injections of bacillus Calmette-Guérin, an attenuated live bacterium. There is no doubt that BCG stimulates the immune system; it has by now been used in more than two billion people worldwide as a vaccine against tuberculosis. Mathé's claims touched off a frenzy of clinical trials of BCG against a variety of cancers, with almost total failure. Other researchers tried injections of blood serums and pig lymphocytes, and other experimental therapies, without success.

The most devastating blow came from England. Working at Mount Vernon Hospital, outside London, Harold B. Hewitt published a paper in 1976 summarizing an extraordinarily exhaustive series of experiments undertaken over a period of nearly two decades which appeared to undermine the very idea that tumors could incite an immune response. Most of the animal tumors that researchers studied were induced



either by viruses or by high doses of chemical carcinogens (painting animals with methylcholanthrene, or coal tar, was a common technique); animals with “experimental cancers” were then created by transplanting these tumor cells into related inbred animals. In many cases researchers could show that these “man-made” tumors were detectable by the immune system, and that animals “vaccinated” with these tumor cells did not develop cancer. Hewitt argued that such tumors were merely “seductive” artifacts; that the cancers that develop in human beings only rarely result from viruses or heavy chemical exposure of the sort that laboratory mice routinely suffer. Much more often they arise spontaneously, owing—it is increasingly clear—to a succession of disruptive genetic mistakes. Hewitt and his colleagues identified and studied twenty-seven kinds of spontaneously occurring tumors through some 20,000 transplants in mice, and claimed that not a single one of these “natural” tumors was blunted by an immune-system attack. Tumor immunology had always been built of shaky materials; Hewitt’s tendentiously authoritative paper leveled it like a tornado in a tent city. But this was also a fresh wind. Stopping just short of accusing the field of intellectual dishonesty, Hewitt demanded greater rigor in a discipline that had become infatuated with unverifiable results.

Boon remained “illiterate,” as he puts it, with respect to Hewitt’s indictment. In November of 1975, just as Hewitt’s paper was being accepted for publication in the *British Journal of Cancer*, Boon performed what he now considers to be the pivotal experiment of his career. Still working with teratocarcinoma, he once again stumbled onto a remarkable aspect of the immune response to cancer. As before, he injected mice with mutated cancer cells; as before, many of the mice failed to develop cancers. Then Boon took the experiment one step further. He injected the same mice, as well as control mice, with unmutated cancer-causing cells—the ones that invariably produced tumors. The animals were caged in a corner of a garage at the Pasteur.

“I still see myself on a Saturday afternoon,” Boon told me, his voice full of wonder surprising in someone who prides

himself on scientific rigor, “alone in the animal house at the Pasteur Institute in Paris. I thought I would faint—because all the control animals had the tumor, and more than three quarters of the experimental animals had rejected the tumor. There was no tumor at all!” Once the mouse immune system had recognized and rejected a mutated version of the cancer cells, it gained the ability to “see” the previously invisible unmutated parent tumor. In mice, at least, the immune system was able to detect things that had previously escaped its notice.

After moving his laboratory to Brussels, Boon and his chief collaborator, Aline Van Pel, tried to explain this puzzling result in a way consistent with genetic techniques. They set out to find the gene for the antigen that made mutated tumors detectable by the immune systems of mice. This research, which stretched over the better part of a decade, was not for the faint of heart (nor, some American scientists point out ruefully, for researchers who need to show progress every three years in order to get their National Institutes of Health grants renewed). Boon realized that mutations in the mutated tumor cells created tiny differences in the antigens, and that T lymphocytes recognized these tiny changes. The scientific challenge, therefore, came in two parts: to isolate and amplify (clone) populations of mouse T cells that recognized specific antigens, and to use those cells as a kind of molecular magnet to pick out the needle in a genetic haystack—the gene responsible for the antigen.

There was no easy way. From the moment Boon stood breathless in the animal room of the Pasteur Institute to the time his group finally got the techniques to yield an answer in mouse tumors, fourteen years passed. But the researchers had good reason to persevere. In 1983 Aline Van Pel repeated Harold Hewitt’s experiments with several spontaneous tumors, and after her mice were “vaccinated” with mutated versions of Hewitt’s invariably aggressive cancers, they, too, acquired the ability to reject the unmutated “natural” cancers. The researchers had the opportunity to see whether the same phenomenon would occur in human beings: at about this time the cells of Frau H. arrived in Brussels.

Self Versus Nonself

LIKE all tumor immunologists, Boon was working at a boundary as much philosophical as scientific: Where does self end and nonself begin? In practical terms the distinction is crucial to survival. The immune system is designed to root out pathogens such as viruses and bacteria with a ferocity that makes it every bit as powerful a force of nature as a hurricane or a volcano. Indeed, the phenomenal rapacity with which T lymphocytes can ravage a transplanted kidney or liver or heart—large organs weighing several pounds—has always tantalized immunologists with the possibility of unleashing the same violence upon tumors.

But cancer cells teeter on the edge between self and nonself. Cancer begins as a single aberrant event in an otherwise normal cell. The cancer cell eventually breaches every convention of cellular etiquette: in its relentless cycles of replication it sabotages internal checkpoints that normally arrest aberrant behavior, and as the tumor grows, crowding neighboring cells, it evolves, apparently reactivating genes used in fetal development. Rather than seeing a threatening stranger, as it does when it encounters a flu virus, the immune system sees only a wayward uncle—a bit odd, perhaps, but a relative nonetheless. Even if tumor antigens exist, they don't normally arouse much of a response. The immune system is said to be "tolerant" of the slight differences shown by cancer cells. Immunologists therefore speak of "breaking tolerance"—of overriding this forgiving relationship and nudging the immune system into recognizing cancer as the threat it is.

Boon's group asked, What did Frau H.'s immune cells perceive, and how were they able to arrest her cancer? Here Boon's work began to intersect with one of the most remarkable recent discoveries in immunology. In the 1970s Rolf Zinkernagel and Peter Doherty reported that T cells recognize antigens only in a very special biological context—when antigens are "presented" in conjunction with a molecule known by the shorthand MHC, for "major histo-compatibility complex." Zinkernagel and Doherty showed, in work for which they received a Nobel Prize last October, that MHC molecules cradle antigens in such a way as to provide what they call the "necessary intimacy of contact" with T cells. About a decade later Alain Townsend, an immunologist at John Radcliffe Hospital, in Oxford, England, and his colleagues demonstrated that a related mechanism occurs in all the normal cells of the body. Each cell in effect cannibalizes every type of protein made inside it and allows the immune system to sample bits of the protein to make sure it is self and not nonself. The agents of this complex enterprise of surveillance are, once again, the lymphocytes—specifically, cytolytic T lymphocytes.

T cells have the ability to search out infinitesimally tiny markers on cells. There are millions of different T lymphocytes, each biologically programmed to recognize a different antigen, and each capable of explosive replication—on the

order of tens of millions of cells in a week or two—if it bumps into the antigen it recognizes. Beginning in the earliest weeks of life our T cells are programmed in the thymus to recognize only nonself proteins; T cells that recognize self proteins are ablated, or destroyed, lest they attack our own tissues. (Breakdowns in this system do occur: T cells attack the self in auto-immune diseases such as lupus and some forms of diabetes.) Moreover, they are cells with a memory. Once a T cell has detected an antigen, it remembers the encounter and reacts more quickly the next time.

Every waking or sleeping moment of our lives, during the homeostatic purr in each of the tens of trillions of cells in our bodies, a molecular salvage crew within each cell tears apart every kind of protein into subunits known as peptides, loads the peptides into the grooves of the MHC molecules, and ships the molecules like industrial barges to the surface of the cell. There the MHC molecules in effect display their cargo in just such a way that the T cells can examine the snippets of protein. To appreciate the precision of this process, consider that each link in a peptide chain is composed of one of twenty possible amino acids. An antigen—a chain nine amino acids long—can theoretically be made of 9^{20} possible combinations. T cells can discriminate between self and nonself on the basis of a change in a single amino acid in a peptide.

If the proteins are normal, T cells will ignore them. If a flu virus has infected the cell, however, some of its viral protein will inevitably be chopped up and shipped to the cell surface along with normal peptides, and T cells will instantly recognize it as foreign. Indeed, the term "recognition" in an immune-system context is laden with alarm and violence. The T cells destroy the marked cell by perforating its cell wall with tiny pores. At the same time, other T cells blare a chemical alarm: they gush molecules called cytokines, some of which recruit other immune cells to the site and others of which cause the subset of T cells that recognize the foreign marker to multiply.

There are drawbacks to this elaborate and robust security system. First, cytokine molecules, such as interferon and interleukin-2, pack an incredible punch, even in vanishingly small amounts. Indeed, the symptoms we usually associate with the flu, including fever, achiness, and malaise, are due not to the influenza virus per se but to the activity of cytokine molecules secreted by aroused immune cells—the unpleasant side effects of a busy and effective immune system. Second, from the moment an infectious agent is identified by the immune system, it takes about seven to ten days for the T-cell response to reach its peak.

Frau H.'s dramatic recovery suggested to Boon that her miracle lay in her molecules; her cancer cells had invited annihilation because they possessed some telltale molecular marker that aroused a response from the very T cells Knuth and Boon had identified in her blood. As is often the case in biology, Boon's laboratory lacked the technology to look di-



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rectly for the antigen. There existed neither a microscope that could provide a glimpse nor a technology for in effect taking cuttings from a cancer cell's surface and identifying a single protein as uniquely antigenic. (Such a technology has recently been developed by Donald Hunt and his colleagues at the University of Virginia.) So the team looked simultaneously in mice and human beings for genes that contained the instructions for making cancer-specific antigens. And they did have one extraordinarily powerful tool, one more precise than an electron microscope, with which to feel out the three-dimensional shape of the human antigen: Frau H.'s blood. By 1987 the researchers had particularly stable clones of her T cells. They would test every gene in Frau H.'s cancer cells until they found the one that made the marker recognized by her T cells.

Only fellow geneticists can appreciate the dimensions of this task and the cleverness with which Boon, Knuth, and their colleagues undertook their search. They knew that such an approach could theoretically work, because in 1989, working with a mouse tumor different from teratocarcinoma, Boon's group identified a tumor-specific antigen that they called P1A in mice. Using the same basic technology, they tackled Frau H.'s DNA. Each human cell, cancer cells included, contains up to 100,000 genes. Each gene contains instructions, encoded in DNA, for a different protein, each of which is a three-dimensional chain composed of dozens or hundreds of amino acids. The large gene for, say, dystrophin, the muscle-tissue protein that is linked to muscular dystrophy, contains about two million base pairs, or letters, of DNA. The hormone insulin has fewer than 2,000 letters, which are the code for a protein fifty-one amino acids long. Because T cells can see only what fits onto an MHC molecule, the immune system recognizes much smaller units—selected outcroppings of these larger globular proteins, typically measuring about nine amino acids in length. A human antigen would represent a twenty-seven-letter portion of a gene up to two million DNA letters long. Searching for this antigen is like looking for a five-word sentence in a 300,000-word novel, buried in a three-billion-letter text of uniformly fine print.

Buoyed by its success in finding a tumor antigen in mice, the Brussels lab chopped up the entire DNA of Frau H.'s melanoma cells—all 100,000 or so genes, all three billion base pairs—and parceled bits of the DNA into approximately 700,000 "cosmids," which to continue the metaphor of letters and text might be thought of as man-made slipcases for smaller volumes in the total DNA library. Each of the 700,000 slipcases, containing a slender volume of Frau H.'s genetic text, could then be inserted into a special recipient cell. Each of these recipient cells, from a distinct cell colony, would read the instructions, make the corresponding bit of protein, and ship it to the cell surface. Thus each colony could be scanned by Frau H.'s own T cells to see if it contained the volume—the gene for the antigen. That was the beastly part of the Brussels experiment. Pierre van der Bruggen, of Boon's laboratory, who did the brunt of this work, used Frau H.'s cancer-specific T cells to identify a mere five colonies of cells, out of 29,000, that contained the gene encoding the antigen. In another series of experiments her T cells pinpointed two more positives out of 13,000 colonies.

Early in 1991, about eight years after Knuth's first visit to Boon, Frau H.'s T cells homed in on the prize. They were able to distinguish a tiny molecular bump on the surface of cells in a colony—a peptide bump, arching out from the surface of the cell and measuring exactly nine amino acids long. Using standard recombinant-DNA techniques, the Belgian scientists cracked open this cell, identified the gene, and produced its complete sequence. Boon called this gene *MAGE* (for "melanoma antigen"), and the group published the results in *Science* at the end of 1991.

"Human tumor immunology up to that point represented a very empiric, observational, nonmolecular kind of discipline that was held in incredibly low esteem by the scientific community, and rightly so," Drew Pardoll, an immunologist at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, told me recently. "All of a sudden, here was a hard-core molecular approach that represented a legitimization of human



cancer immunology. There were genes and antigens that had obvious and clear-cut implications for therapy, and could be crafted into antigen-specific vaccines." As Knuth says, "The December *Science* paper was the turning point, because then human tumor immunology was reborn."

Altered Selves

DESPITE the almost weekly front-page dispatches about newly discovered genes, whether they are related to obesity or breast cancer, it cannot be stressed enough that the discovery of a new gene does not so much end a story as punctuate a very long preface to what is usually an even longer and more complicated biological tale. Researchers need to understand what protein the gene makes, when it makes it, how that protein fits into cell commerce, and whether the protein plays a central, irreplaceable role or is part of a redundant biochemical chain of events. What MAGE has to do with cancer—and, more important, with cancer treatment—still belongs to that larger, more uncertain, unfolding story.

The Brussels group discovered that MAGE was one small part of the X chromosome—a normal but silent gene in normal cells. In about 30 percent of melanomas, however, the gene became active, or was "expressed"; it also appeared to be active, albeit less frequently, in several commoner tumors, including breast cancer and lung cancer. Boon soon had reason to append the numeral 1 to "MAGE," because it quickly

became clear that the gene had many siblings—that it belonged, in fact, to a large family of related genes, all previously unknown to biologists and all inactive in normal, mature cells (with one exception: they are expressed, although so far they are not thought to be a precursor to tumors, in the testes). In 1994 Boon's group reported that the related gene MAGE-3 was present on the surface of a great number of tumors. At last count Boon's group had identified three genes in the MAGE family and two other genes, BAGE and GAGE, that encode tumor antigens. Every one of these genes came to light in Frau H.'s cancer cells before being found in other people's normal cells, and all were ferreted out using Frau H.'s T cells.

As to why a tumor would avail itself of a normally silent gene, Boon speculates that once a cell is "transformed," or becomes cancerous by whatever means (genetic predisposition, for example, or exposure to chemical carcinogens), it reaches into its own genetic archive and resurrects dormant genes that served the body during its earliest embryological moments—genes that allow it to move around, or metastasize. "Clearly, genes have not been created to be expressed in tumors," Boon explained. "I believe that *all* types of genes, like MAGE and BAGE and GAGE, must be expressed in the embryo somewhere or maybe in some cells of the placenta. And the function that these genes have in the embryo—say, perhaps, for allowing tissues to move or cells to move within tissues—might be reused by tumor cells when they want to metastasize."

Publication of the discovery of the MAGE gene broke the longstanding theoretical logjam in tumor immunology, and, perhaps not coincidentally, the field has rapidly progressed. A growing number of tumor-associated antigens have been identified. Boon's group, and others, have determined that sometimes more than one antigen is associated with a gene: peptides in the MAGE-3 gene associate with at least two different MHC molecules, A-1 and A-2. The Brussels group has also identified two so-called differentiation antigens, which have complicated the picture considerably. These antigens are not specific to melanoma cells per se but are

Frau H.'s cancer has
never come back.
Depending on one's point
of view, she was cured
by the surgery and vaccine,
or somehow managed
to cure herself of a
malignant and undoubtedly
terminal cancer.

typically expressed in (and restricted to) melanocytes, the normal skin cells in which the cancer arises. It was a surprise that the T cells of some melanoma patients recognized antigens in normal proteins—a situation that verges on an auto-immune response; Boon's group has found two of these antigens in melanoma, Melan-A and tyrosinase. A group at the National Cancer Institute, headed by Steven A. Rosenberg, has also reported two differentiation antigens, MART-1 (identical to Melan-A) and gp100; a team at the University of Virginia independently identified gp100. Several other antigens are also under study, including an unusual form of a protein seen in some breast, colon, and stomach cancers, known as mucin, and a well-known protein called CEA (for "carcinoembryonic antigen"), also seen in breast, colon, and lung cancers. Rosenberg's group recently described another half dozen antigens. Boon says, "I think it's still a perfect possibility that there will be hundreds of them."

The discovery of T-cell-specific antigens has "inaugurated a new era in cancer immunology," according to Lloyd Old, who heads the Ludwig Institute and is an elder statesman in the field. If they did not exactly scream "nonself," these antigens at least whispered "not quite self," and did so loudly enough to attract notice from the immune system. In light of this and subsequent discoveries, Alan Houghton, a cancer immunologist at Sloan-Kettering, has come to refer to cancer cells as "altered self," rather than "nonself." By identifying tumor-antigen genes, Boon and many other cancer immunologists throughout the world could begin to test ideas about manipulating the immune system to react more aggressively to these signals from the altered self. Not surprisingly, considerable hurdles remain.

The Houdini Phenomenon

IF tumors wave red flags at the immune system, why don't T cells charge like aroused bulls? The answer is that during the development of a malignant disease, tumor cells must evolve in order to survive, and one crucial adaptation is to become invisible to the immune system.

Joost Oppenheim, a researcher at the National Cancer Institute, has observed that viruses know a lot more about the human immune system than immunologists do, and the same could be said of tumors. Far from being the mindlessly replicating drones of popular description, tumors are exceedingly clever about thwarting the immune system. Lloyd Old has referred to this ability as the "Houdini phenomenon." If cells of the immune system recognize and react against a tumor antigen, a tumor cell may mutate to shut off the gene encoding that antigen, muffling the cry that gives away its identity as a cancer cell. This kind of cell will have a survival advantage as the disease evolves. And tumors have other tricks to jam the chemical signaling of the immune system. They can "upregulate," or churn out, genes that make molecules that signal the

immune system to throttle back; and they can "downregulate," or reduce the production of, genes that make molecules that carry signals between immune cells. In extreme cases the tumor may shut down any of several genes that tell the cell how to make and use the crucial MHC molecules, thus short-circuiting the body's security system altogether.

These various evasive strategies go by the name "tumor escape mechanisms." Walter Bodmer, the director of the Imperial Cancer Research Fund, in London, reminds colleagues to "think evolution, evolution, evolution" when pondering the mutations common to cancer cells. Playing by the same Darwinian rules of survival as penicillin-resistant bacteria, tumors constantly evolve so that the heartiest, most evasive, and, alas, most malignant tumor cells survive. "There is constant competition among the tumor cells," Boon explains, "for the one that is going to be a little more malignant than the others, multiply a bit better, invade [surrounding tissues] a bit better."

In the context of such evasive behavior Boon has used the MAGE gene to show just how individual a disease cancer is. Once the cancer begins to grow, it does so in an immune-system ecology that is unique, because of genetics and "personal immunology": as Boon discovered with the MAGE genes, one reason that many melanomas remain invisible to the immune system is related as much to the patient's genes as to the characteristics of the tumor. Again, cytolytic T cells are incapable of detecting an antigen—be it a snippet of flu virus or a scrap of MAGE-1—unless it is presented on the surface of the cell by MHC molecules. But there is enormous genetic variation in the human MHC system, much more so than in hair or eye color.

Each of us inherits six subtypes of MHC transport molecules, also known as HLA markers, such as HLA A-1, A-2, B-24, B-37, C-4, and C-6, from among hundreds of possible subtypes. These subtypes serve as very specific blood markers, similar to but much more precise than blood type. Only certain peptide antigens will fit each of the HLA subtypes. Thus for an immune system to have a chance at destroying a melanoma (or perhaps one of many other cancers) it is not enough to have a tumor displaying the MAGE-1 antigen; the person must have inherited the proper HLA molecule, with the right-sized molecular groove into which the relevant peptide from MAGE-1 will fit. If the antigen doesn't fit, the immune system will never see it.

Boon's work with Frau H.'s blood demonstrated that MAGE-1 fits snugly into only HLA A-1. Approximately 26 percent of Caucasians, including Frau H., carry the A-1 molecule. In practical terms, whether or not a melanoma is immunogenic depends on heredity. If 30 percent of melanoma patients produce MAGE-1 antigens and 26 percent of Caucasians carry the HLA A-1 protein, a simple calculation demonstrates that only about eight percent of Caucasians with melanoma will have the right combination of tumor antigen and MHC molecules to allow the immune system to detect

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the tumor. That number sounds low. But each additional antigen discovered improves the odds; this has been especially true since the Brussels laboratory reported the discovery of MAGE-3. This antigen, presented by A-1 and A-2 molecules, appears in 70 percent of metastatic melanomas and also in many lung tumors, bladder tumors, and head-and-neck squamous-cell carcinomas. This means, Boon later wrote, that "for the first time we can select as candidates for therapy those patients who have a chance of benefiting from immunization."

Experiments With Vaccines

THE notion of vaccinating people against their cancer after the cancer has been discovered has been in and out of fashion since the turn of the century: a primitive cancer vaccine was developed in 1893 by William B. Coley, of Memorial Hospital in New York. A number of first-generation melanoma vaccines have been tested since the early 1970s, some of them in studies conducted by Michael Mastrogelo and David Berd, at Jefferson Medical College, in Philadelphia; Malcolm Mitchell, now at the University of California at San Diego; Donald Morton, at the John Wayne Cancer Institute, in Santa Monica; and Jean-Claude Bystryk, at New York University Medical Center. Most of these vaccines have been created by grinding up or irradiating tumor cells and injecting them into patients, somewhat as Boon and Knuth did with Frau H. But the experimenters have typically lacked precise molecular knowledge about what antigens the vaccine contained, what sort of immune response it might inspire, and who might be genetically disposed to respond to it. Although many physicians think that randomized clinical trials of these vaccines have not provided clear-cut demonstrations of efficacy, there has been consistent evidence from nonrandomized trials that at least 10 to 20 percent of patients have favorable responses; indeed, it is likely that Frau H. responded to just such a crude, almost desperate intervention. What separates the MAGE work from previous vaccine strategies is that Boon and Knuth successfully tackled the very substantial problem of explaining on the molecular level how and why an immune response occurred. Using a simple blood test and an analysis of the tumor, a physician might now be able to predict which patients are likely to respond to vaccination and design a vaccine to induce the desired response. On the basis of Boon's work, laboratories in Europe and the United States are performing those tests, and patients are receiving experimental tumor vaccines.

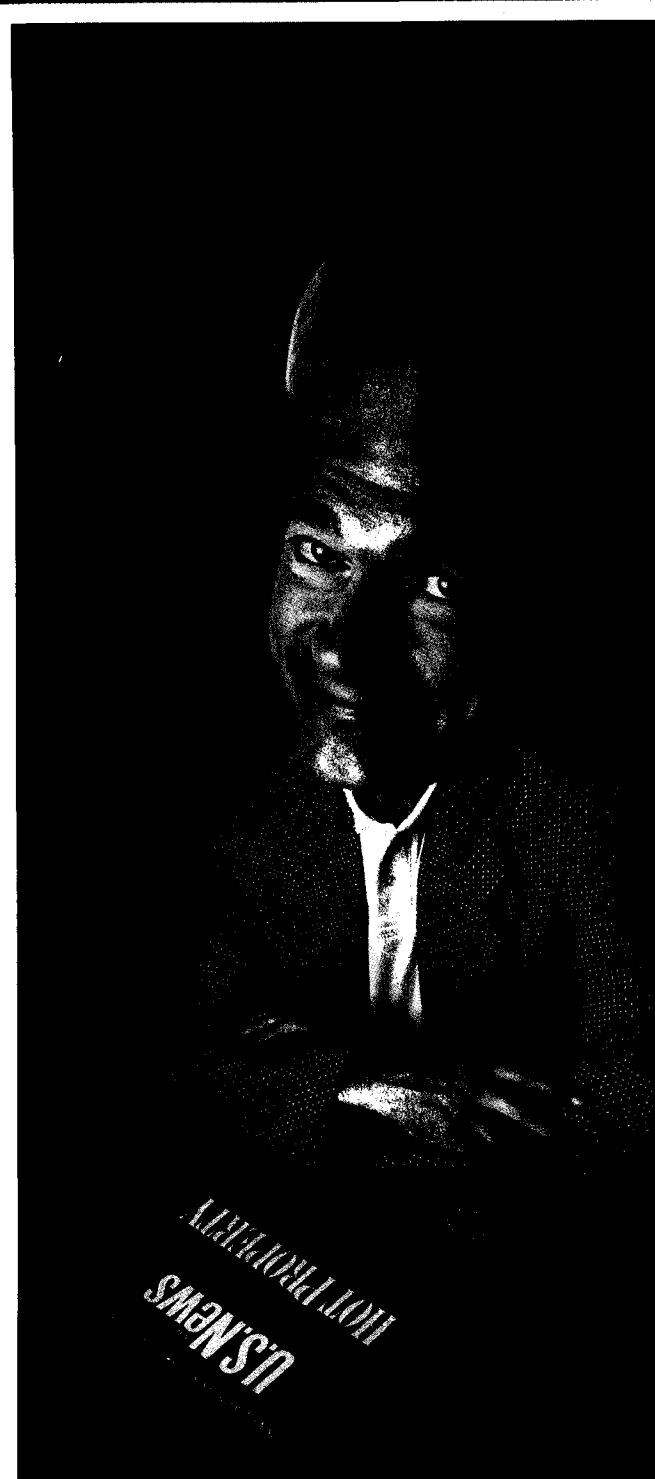
Each antigen provides the starting point for a different cancer vaccine. Doctors have begun to test a dizzyingly broad array of potential vaccines in patients, and although these initial trials are designed to test the safety rather than the effectiveness of the vaccines, researchers have reason to be optimistic. In 1993 Boon's group, in conjunction with Alex Knuth in Germany and doctors in Italy, France, Bel-

gium, and the Netherlands, prepared a bare-bones vaccine using a small immunogenic fragment—the MAGE-3 peptide—to see if it would provoke a measurable rise in T cells in genetically compatible patients. "I would bet everything that we are not going to see any effects," Boon predicted at the time. "But who knows?" More than a year later the results were surprising.

In December of 1995 Boon, Knuth, and their colleagues published a report on their MAGE-3 vaccine in sixteen patients selected for compatible HLA types. Because the patients had rapidly advancing cancers, only six of the sixteen received the complete course of treatment, which consisted of injections of the MAGE-3 peptide once a month for three months. Nonetheless, three of six patients with advanced disease experienced "very significant" tumor regressions, and the side effects reported were negligible. After three injections a Belgian woman with about a hundred small melanoma nodules on her left leg began to experience a remission. Four months later all the tumors had disappeared. A Dutch woman whose melanoma had spread to her lungs also enjoyed a complete remission, with four of her lung tumors disappearing about three months after her third injection, and the fifth shrinking. Updating these still very preliminary results at a meeting in the fall of last year, Boon reported that five of sixteen melanoma patients who underwent the entire course of treatment experienced significant responses.

Once researchers identify an antigen, they may present it to the immune system using a variety of vaccine strategies. Steven Rosenberg, at the National Cancer Institute, has nine different vaccine trials under way, and has treated about 141 patients. He has inserted genes encoding tumor antigens into several common viruses, including adenovirus and vaccinia virus, and given them as vaccines, with or without a follow-up dose of the cytokine interleukin-2; he has also genetically modified some of these peptides in an attempt to elicit a stronger T-cell response. His group has seen several responses that he describes as "sporadic, and I emphasize sporadic." A group at the University of Virginia, headed by Craig Slingluff and Victor Engelhard, recently began testing a melanoma vaccine based on portions of the gp100 antigen; the vaccine is being administered with one of two adjuvants, which are concoctions of oil, water, and various other ingredients that seem to stimulate a generalized immune response.

There are still other variations on this theme being actively pursued. Ronald Levy and his colleagues at Stanford University are testing a vaccine against non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. In this case they isolate the antigen specific to each patient and insert it into immune cells known as dendritic cells, which arouse particularly vigorous T-cell reactions. They then vaccinate patients with these altered cells. So far they have seen encouraging responses in a small number of patients. A group headed by Walter Storkus and colleagues at the University of Pittsburgh recently began a trial with a sim-



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I couldn't read another thing."**

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ilar dendritic-cell vaccine against melanoma. Meanwhile, a group headed by Drew Pardoll, at Johns Hopkins, has begun giving patients with advanced kidney cancer a vaccine developed using a technology called gene therapy, in which a desirable gene is inserted into a person's cells. In this approach researchers insert the gene for a cytokine, or signaling molecule, known as GM-CSF (for "granulocyte macrophage colony stimulating factor") into irradiated tumor cells and inject these cells back into patients, so that the disabled cancer cells will send a message recruiting helper T cells to the tumor. Pardoll says the group has already seen "some evidence of clinical response." Using a similar gene-therapy approach with a different cytokine molecule, interleukin-12, Michael Lotze and Hideaki Tahara, of the University of Pittsburgh, have seen five "interesting" responses out of twenty-six patients in early trials.

One of the most unusual and unorthodox approaches has been championed by Pramod Srivastava, of Fordham University, in New York. Srivastava's group has identified a class of molecules inside cells collectively known as heat-shock proteins, which collect peptides. Srivastava maintains that by isolating heat-shock proteins from a tumor cell, he can capture the entire antigenic repertoire of any patient's tumor at one time and then administer this repertoire of antigens as a vaccine. A pilot clinical trial has been completed in Germany, and a new trial is scheduled to begin this spring in the United States.

Finally, recent clinical work by Alex Knuth in Frankfurt serves as a reminder that excitement over these new vaccines must be tempered with caution. In preliminary safety studies Knuth's group has injected GM-CSF directly into melanoma patients and then vaccinated them with peptides from several differentiation antigens. To date the group has seen four beneficial responses in sixteen patients with metastatic melanoma, but it has also seen evidence of the "Houdini phenomenon" in several patients: apparently, in the presence of T cells some tumors stop expressing the antigen targeted by the vaccine.

Because of this broad array of approaches, Lloyd Old, of the Ludwig Institute, remarked that there is "a healthy lack of unanimity on the proper way to proceed." All these vaccines await the kind of randomized clinical trials necessary to establish their efficacy. However, Victor Engelhard says, "We've got five or six different proteins in the case of melanoma, at least one good one in the case of ovarian cancer, and one very unusual antigen in breast cancer. So in the next year or two we're probably going to know if they're going to work or not."

Boon is optimistic that the odds may shift in favor of the patient. "I believe that if we're able to attack a tumor through two or three or four antigens as opposed to one," he told me, "we are going to do infinitely better. And the good news is that our analysis indicates that there *are* going to be many

antigens we can pursue in every tumor. A way for tumors to escape the immune system is just to stop making an antigen, deleting or inactivating the gene. If we attack five antigens simultaneously, it's going to be very difficult for the tumor to delete all the genes. But besides that, I believe that if the immune system can recognize two or three antigens in a tumor, the primary attack on the tumor by the immune system is going to be enormously facilitated."

Complete Durable Remissions

DEFINITIVE answers about these new vaccines will take years to be reached, in part because the value of a cancer treatment cannot be assessed until the status of patients five years after treatment is known. Oncologists have become so gun-shy about the word "cure" that they resort to the phrase "complete durable remission" to refer to patients who remain cancer-free for five years or more.

At least one indisputably complete and durable remission has resulted from the MAGE work. As she sat in a functional black chair in Knuth's office one day, listening to my questions with a wary, almost grave expression on her long face, Frau H. was reluctant even to make eye contact.

Frau H. looked nothing like the woman whose tribulations Knuth had spent the previous hour detailing—an ordeal that included, in addition to metastatic melanoma, open-heart surgery, episodes of psychosis requiring hospitalization, and the death of her husband from lung cancer. Perhaps the most remarkable thing about her was simply how healthy she appeared. Her life had blossomed following her remission, Knuth told me. Yes, she initially returned to the job she hated. But I took it as an almost unquantifiable measure of good health that she lived long enough to quit that job and move on to activities she liked better.

Did she know that her cells had been sent to laboratories throughout the world, that important genes had been discovered inside them, that vaccines were being created based on them? She was vaguely aware of this, but mostly because it involved "many, many injections" and the taking of blood. Was there ever a moment when she felt she might not survive? "No, not really," she said with a shrug. "There were moments of distress. But I never felt that it was the end. I never thought it was so dramatic."

A fellow scientist has remarked that Thierry Boon is the "quintessential purist," having virtually made a career trying to understand one aspect of biology in a single patient. Boon has never met Frau H. Her recovery has now lasted twelve years; her cancer has not recurred, and she remains a medical anecdote that will never be told in the journals, because her doctors never obtained that conclusive biopsy sample. When I asked Boon if he planned ever to write up her case, he said, "No," wearing on this occasion his coat of modesty. "This is not the kind of thing you write in a paper." ☘



Small Consolation

by JOEL OSTROW

MY aunt Libby's only son was killed over Italy during the Second World War. She had one daughter as well, but the girl was retarded and by the time I knew Aunt Libby had been relinquished to the care of an institution. These were facts that I was told, but beyond those essential details Aunt Libby's misfortunes were never discussed in our family. So I was left to wonder why she always seemed so kind.

Even though I was quite young—perhaps six or seven—when the information about her children was shared with me, I felt that she should be angry, or at least sad, but certainly not sweet or caring, as she was. Later I heard

On Monday, if no one in the office seemed to be glancing at her guardedly, or whispering just out of her presence, he would hope she felt protected by her new and trusted friend

my mother recalling to another relative what a wonderful athlete Aunt Libby's son had been, and how well he had done in school. I thought then that maybe Aunt Libby's continued amiability resulted from never having to see either child fail. For her daughter

she had no expectations. Those she might have had for her son would never have to be met.

When I became an adult, Aunt Libby was still alive. I would see her every six months or so at a family gathering. She would go from table to table asking how everybody was, inquiring after children, including my own, and laughing at stories like ours of stopping the car after my daughter

had spilled ice cream on herself to have her hosed off by a stranger watering his lawn.

Looking at my own boy and girl rendered me even more confounded by my aunt's demeanor after such unbearable loss. Once, when we were seated together at a cousin's wedding, I was going to ask how she had conquered her life, but I lost my nerve. The opportunity passed and then she died.

I'm sure others would have ascribed her equanimity to faith, the usual explanation, but the promise of such transcendence has always seemed to me too illusory to have any real value.

Later I had a friend who lost a son in an automobile accident at the age of twenty. I allowed the period of public mourning to pass, and then I went to see him.

"My wife is coming through this well," he told me. "She says John is in a better place." He paused, but not to hear from me. "There is no better place," he said.

I supposed he was surviving on gratitude for the time he had had with his child. That barely works for me when I become upset that my children are away during the summer months. I do not cope well. What small adversities I do face, I treat with alcohol. I have a worrisome job in an office of overstressed employees. Almost every Friday night some of us go to one bar or another in search of a low level of oblivion.

I get tired during those evenings much more easily than I did several years ago, but I still go, because I still need a

night during which I don't have to think about certain parts of my life.

A core of regulars attends these outings, but every so often somebody fresh is tried out, to see if he or she fits in with our particular brand of indulgent behavior and unrepressed cynicism. Indeed, each new employee at the company is given the opportunity to come along once or twice for a potential initiation. If the new employee is a pretty girl, it is my task to ask her if she would like to be included. I am presumed to be past the age of uncertain motives, if not beyond the time of impure thoughts. Thus when Colleen began to work in the office, I extended her an invitation.

She was a lovely girl, with an aura of innocence that, if not out of fashion, is certainly rare. She was quiet, and had a benevolent-looking smile while she worked. Her hair was a very wheat-like blonde, which she set off with lipstick that was an unassertive shade of red. Her eyes were so sparkly that their color could not be discerned in a quick hallway passing. She was thin—almost delicate; she dressed with care, but not as if she wanted to be noticed.

Approaching her actually made me nervous: I feared my invitation would somehow be an insult. But I smiled a fatherly smile and stood over her desk.

"Hi, Colleen," I said. "How do you like it here so far?" She did not work directly for me, and she would not hear this as a job-related question with only one right answer.

"I've liked it fine," she told me. "There's a real good atmosphere here. Everybody's so nice."

ON MOUNT TIMPANOGOS, 1935

Lodged against the mountain's collarbone
miles above Provo when I was seven,
my mother, sister and I

summered fatherless in a board shack
whose door we hasped at night
against the knock-knock of bears.

Eating out of a skillet, we lolled
naked in aspen-green sunlight,
felt timid only after dark

in the privy. Mine was the once-a-day task
of retrieving, from a miserly trickle
that welled from a seam down the slope,

our few gallons of water. After the spring filled
I'd send a pail racketing along a rope,
race it down a gravelly path

under the overhead clatter of the pulley
and dunk it;
then toil back upward

beneath its sloshing weight of water, vaster
than you could guess, heaving it,
consecrated, untouchable.

So words lunge upward
till habit reclaims them
and they tip into the spillway
of a lie.

—PETER DAVISON

"Some of us are going to go out for a beer tomorrow night, and we were wondering if you'd like to come along—to sort of get better acquainted." She looked puzzled. "It's not required," I said, smiling, "and we won't keep you out too late."

"Okay," she said, and I told her we would come by at five o'clock and gather her up. And we did.

We went to a dark, lively place that was large enough to have a few pool tables and room for a dart game. High tables were scattered around, surrounded by stools. There were seven of us, and we put two tables together and got our drinks from the bar.

Twenty minutes into the carefully crafted revelry, we realized that Colleen was not going to be joining us on a regular basis. She had ordered a diet Coke, and gave the most limited answers possible to our attempts to draw her out. Where do you live? On the north side. What do you do when you're not at work? Not much. What kind of music do you listen to? All kinds.

When the rest of us began to feel inebriated enough to start the weekly round of insult humor, Colleen was at best bemused. At worst she was totally detached. She drank her soda from a straw and stared down into the glass. I could feel her wondering how to take her leave, and how soon.

I thought perhaps we were to blame. We were so used to one another's company that we almost instantly fell into a codified form of communication. An aggressive person would not have let herself be excluded, but Colleen was not an aggressive person.

When Vickie and Alison went to the bathroom, Frank left for the bar to get another round, and Ben and Eric set up at a pool table, I moved to a stool next to Colleen.

She did not wear a wedding or an engagement ring, so I asked her if she had a boyfriend. She looked like a girl who would have one. "No," she said. "Not for some time now."

"How long is that?"

"Well," she said, "years, actually. I was married until six months ago."

I was slightly surprised. Not that I couldn't imagine her as a wife—but I had difficulty thinking of her as divorced. She seemed too compliant to initiate such an action, and too precious to have it inflicted upon her. Apparently, however, one of those propositions was not true.

I could hardly ask what happened, a martini and a half notwithstanding, so I asked her the next obvious factual question.

"Do you have any kids?"

"Yes and no."

I immediately assumed that her husband had gained custody of their issue in the divorce. "Well, you see him . . . or her . . . or them, don't you?"

She looked at me for a moment. Later I realized that she had hesitated to see if she could formulate a way to say what came next with minimal discomfort to me.

"My son died," she said, "a few months ago. He was five."

I looked at her—I couldn't very well look away—and took a long breath to find words beyond "I'm sorry" or "Oh, Jesus."

"How horrible," I told her with sincere conviction. "And here I was thinking you weren't being much fun to be with. Now I know it can't be much fun to be you. I'm sorry."

She forced a laugh then, to disengage my solemnity. "Until that little fact is out in the open, I'm definitely not fun to be with. I sit knowing that I'm going to have to stun everybody, and that everyone will be uneasy and not know what to say. Then I'll be an object of sympathy, and giving sympathy is not why you're all out on a Friday night."

No, it's not, I thought; but Colleen's need for distraction was far greater than mine, and here she was, sipping a diet Coke while I was trying to fog up my windows.

"You're entitled to sympathy," I said, "and whatever other little relief we might be able to muster for you. I have two children myself, and I can barely read a newspaper article about teenagers in an accident or a kid who gets snatched."

She made no response, and I realized I had confirmed her fear that other people would recoil from her circumstances and then from her. I changed the subject, I thought. "Did you ever drink?" I asked her.

"Not very often, or very much," she told me. "Alcohol has been recommended to me frequently in the past six months. But I want to stay in touch with things. If I stay in touch with them, they don't sneak up on me."

Vickie and Alison returned, and Alison was starting to feel playful. "You going to stay out for a while this time?" she asked me, "or do you have to run off to the wife and kiddies?" People without children often act as if going home to your family is a betrayal of friendship.

"I haven't decided yet," I told her. "It depends on what you're able to tempt me with."

"I haven't grown a third breast," she said, "and I never could tempt you with the other two." I laughed, and so did Colleen.

"Maybe Colleen can entice you," Alison suggested. "That is, if she's sticking it out for a while. How about it, Colleen—and how about a real drink?"

I had felt protective of Colleen from the moment she had confided in me, so I answered for her. "Don't be a carrier, Alison. Alcoholism is still regarded as a bad habit."

"Not where I'm from," she said cheerfully. "It's regarded as a way of life." Alison's main charm was that she could never be offended.

Colleen spoke up in her own behalf. "I really need to get home," she said. "Laundry and that sort of thing. Thanks for inviting me. I had fun." She slid off her stool and walked out of the bar. I knew as I watched her leave that to me she would always look defeated.

Eric, Ben, and Frank made their way back to our tables. None of them asked what had become of Colleen. That suited me.

Her secret had now become my secret. Maybe she had even intended that to happen. On Monday, if none of these people seemed to be glancing at her guardedly, or whispering just out of her presence, I would hope she felt protected by her new and trusted friend.

On the other hand, she hadn't told me not to say anything. Maybe I was supposed to be her messenger to everybody else—the person who would get everyone across the bridge of her discomfort and let her become a normal part of the office.

One thing I did know was that if I had another drink, the gin would make the decision for me. So I put on my coat and left for home, to the catcalls of my co-workers.

On Monday, I exchanged the usual perfunctory greetings with Colleen when I passed her desk. Upon returning to my office, I reflected that if I followed that pattern for a few days, it would be as if she had never told me.

The only person with whom I had talked about Colleen's history was my wife, who was properly and honestly horrified, and asked me how the boy had died. "I don't know," I said, "and I'm pretty sure I don't want to know."

As I sat in my office that Monday, I was absolutely sure I did not want to know. What a coward I am, I thought. I cannot share even a scintilla of a burden that must be terribly difficult to bear alone. But then, I felt basically powerless anyway. If I could not help her scream, what real good could I do? I just hoped I would not find some way to do her harm.

I know that this is how I always am. We learn about ourselves late at night, when we can't sleep and the room is dark. I have learned, for example, that if my wife became disabled, I would not leave her, but I would be unfaithful to her. I could not disown my responsibility to her, but I could not assume any of her handicap either. My wife knows this about me. Selfishness is a hard secret to keep.

SEVERAL weeks went by. Colleen did not attend any more Friday-night bar sessions, and I did not tell anyone what had happened to her, even on the evenings when I had way too much to drink. Nobody ever whispered it to me, so I guessed that she had never again divulged this information.

My plan, to simply retreat, had been successful. We said hello to each other once in a while, and that's all. In the silence of my office I felt that I had abandoned her, that I had behaved essentially as I always did.

One day she was not at her desk. After several days somebody else was there. "What happened to Colleen?" I asked someone in her department.

"She quit."

My feeling then was one of complete failure. As long as I was seeing her five times a week, I had had a chance to redeem myself, even if I kept putting it off. Now she was gone.

I went to the personnel office.

"A girl recently quit," I said. "Colleen Patton. I borrowed a book from her and never returned it. She must have forgotten to ask me for it when she left. Can you give me her address?" I learned long ago that the more drawn out a lie is, the more likely it is to be believed. I was given her address, although providing such information was "highly irregular," I was told.

I wrote her a letter.

Dear Colleen:

I have been lost around you, and myself, since the night you went out with us and you told me about your son.

I know you must have told me because you were counting on me to help you in some way. I was never able to do that.

For what little solace it might provide, I want you to know that I think about you every day and hurt for your loss.

I know I'm too late to give you whatever it was you really needed from me—whether it was to have one person at work you could share your ordeal with when it became too much, or whether it was for me to ease your transition here by telling the others so you wouldn't have to repeatedly face telling them yourself.

Whichever it was, I'm sorry I simply ran away. Unfortunately, it seems to be what I am best at.

Sincerely,

Daniel Griffith

Weeks went by. Sending the letter had a somewhat calming influence on me, and after a while I surmised that I had been forgiven. Then one day a small envelope, addressed in unfamiliar feminine handwriting, was put on my desk with the rest of my mail.

Dear Mr. Griffith,

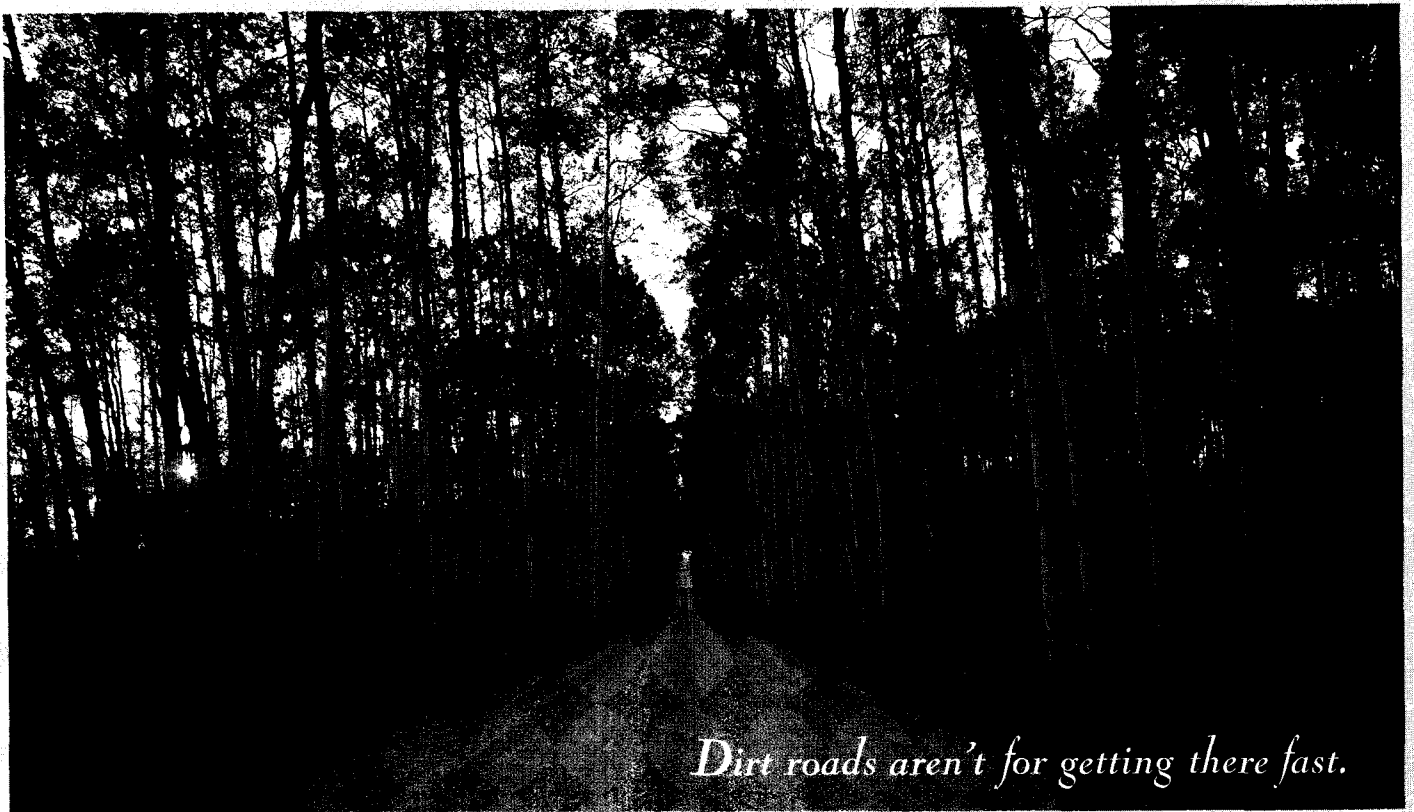
I didn't expect anything from you. I told you about my son because you asked.

Colleen Patton

What a good thing it is, I thought, that so little is expected from me—by Colleen, by my wife, by God himself, who thrusts upon me only the smallest of problems: the knowledge of right and the inability to perform it.

The real tragedies are handed to those who, like God, bewilder the rest of us.

So I have the answer I sought about Aunt Libby. The answer is that I am not good enough to know it. ☞



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More Reefer Madness

by ERIC SCHLOSSER

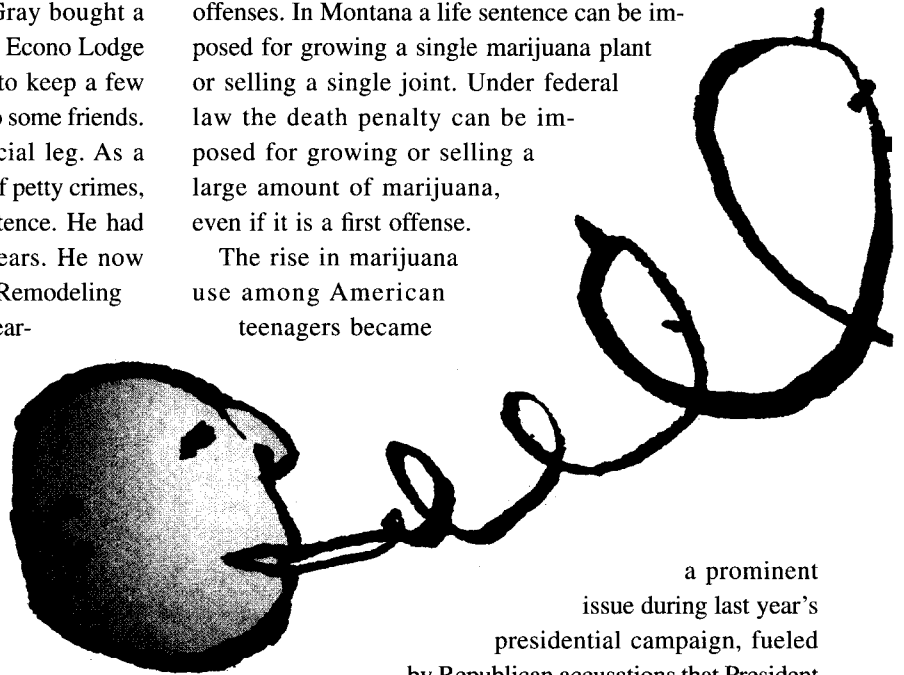
Marijuana gives rise to insanity—not in its users but in the policies directed against it. A nation that sentences the possessor of a single joint to life imprisonment without parole but sets a murderer free after perhaps six years is, the author writes, “in the grip of a deep psychosis”

EIGHT years ago Douglas Lamar Gray bought a pound of marijuana in a room at the Econo Lodge in Decatur, Alabama. He planned to keep a few ounces for himself and sell the rest to some friends. Gray was a Vietnam veteran with an artificial leg. As a young man, he'd been convicted of a number of petty crimes, none serious enough to warrant a prison sentence. He had stayed out of trouble for a good thirteen years. He now owned a business called Gray's Roofing and Remodeling Service. He had a home, a wife, and a two-year-old son. The man who sold him the drug, Jimmy Wilcox, was a felon just released from prison, with more than thirty convictions on his record. Wilcox was also an informer employed by the Morgan County Drug Task Force. The pound of marijuana had been supplied by the local sheriff's department, as part of a sting. After paying Wilcox \$900 for the pot, which seemed like a real bargain, Douglas Lamar Gray was arrested and charged with “trafficking in cannabis.” He was tried, convicted, fined \$25,000, sentenced to life in prison without parole, and sent to the maximum-security penitentiary in Springville, Alabama—an aging, overcrowded prison filled with murderers and other violent inmates. He remains there to this day. Under the stress of his imprisonment Gray's wife attempted suicide with a pistol, survived the gunshot, and then filed for divorce. Jimmy Wilcox, the informer, was paid \$100 by the county for his services in the case.

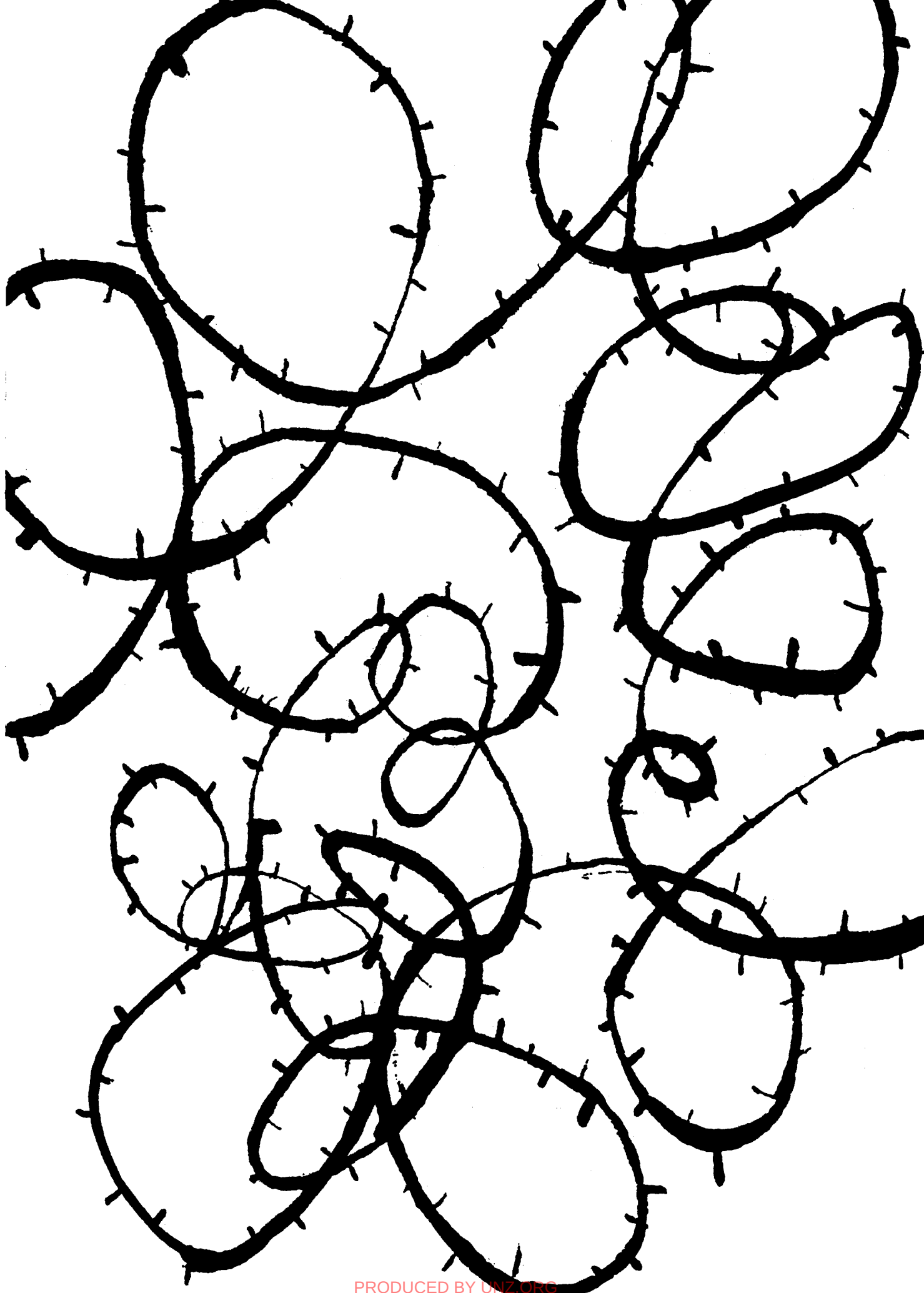
Gray's punishment, although severe, is by no means unusual in the United States. The laws of at least fifteen states now require life sentences for certain nonviolent marijuana

offenses. In Montana a life sentence can be imposed for growing a single marijuana plant or selling a single joint. Under federal law the death penalty can be imposed for growing or selling a large amount of marijuana, even if it is a first offense.

The rise in marijuana use among American teenagers became



a prominent issue during last year's presidential campaign, fueled by Republican accusations that President Bill Clinton was “soft on drugs.” Teenage marijuana use has indeed grown considerably since 1992; by one measure it has doubled. But that increase cannot be attributed to any slackening in the enforcement of the nation's marijuana laws. In fact, the number of Americans arrested each year for marijuana offenses has increased by 43 percent since Clinton took office. There were roughly 600,000 marijuana-related arrests nationwide in 1995—an all-time record. More Americans were arrested for marijuana offenses during the first three years of Clinton's presidency than during any other three-year period in the nation's history. More Americans are in prison today for marijuana offenses than at any other time in our history. And yet teenage marijuana use continues to grow.



The war on drugs, launched by President Ronald Reagan in 1982, began as an assault on marijuana. Its effects are now felt throughout America's criminal-justice system. In 1980 there were almost twice as many violent offenders in federal prison as drug offenders. Today there are far more people in federal prison for marijuana crimes than for violent crimes. More people are now incarcerated in the nation's prisons for marijuana than for manslaughter or rape.

In an era when the fear of violence pervades the United States, small-time pot dealers are being given life sentences while violent offenders are being released early, only to commit more crimes. The federal prison system and thirty-eight state prison systems are now operating above their rated capacity. Attempts to reduce dangerous prison overcrowding have been hampered by the nation's drug laws. Prison cells across the country are filled with nonviolent drug offenders whose mandatory-minimum sentences do not allow for parole. At the same time, violent offenders are routinely being granted early release. A recent study by the Justice Department found that in 1992 violent offenders on average were released after serving less than half of their sentences. A person convicted of murder in the United States could expect a punishment of less than six years in prison. A person convicted of kidnapping could expect about four years. Another Justice Department study revealed that almost a third of all violent offenders who are released from prison will be arrested for another violent crime within three years. No one knows how many violent crimes these released inmates commit without ever being caught. In 1992 the average punishment for a violent offender in the United States was forty-three months in prison. The average punishment, under federal law, for a marijuana offender that same year was about fifty months in prison.

Even legislation aimed at reducing violent crime has been subverted by the legal underpinnings of the drug war. According to a report by the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, California's much-heralded "three strikes, you're out" law has imprisoned twice as many people for marijuana offenses as for murder, rape, and kidnapping combined.

The vehemence of marijuana's opponents and the harsh punishments routinely administered to marijuana offenders cannot be explained by a simple concern for public health. Paraplegics, cancer patients, epileptics, people with AIDS, and people suffering from multiple sclerosis have in recent years been imprisoned for using marijuana as medicine. The attack on marijuana, since its origins early in this century, has in reality been a cultural war—a moral crusade in defense of traditional American values. The laws used to fight marijuana are now causing far more harm to those values than the drug itself. In order to eliminate marijuana use, state and federal legislators have sanctioned an enormous increase in prosecutorial power, the emergence of a class of professional informers, and the widespread confiscation of private

property by the government without trial—legal weapons reminiscent of those used in the former Soviet-bloc nations. The long prison sentences given to growers and dealers have pushed marijuana prices skyward, creating a domestic industry whose annual revenues now rival those of cotton, soybeans, or corn. U.S. public officials, like their counterparts in Mexico, Colombia, and Bolivia, are being corrupted with drug money. Millions of ordinary Americans have been arrested for marijuana offenses in the past decade, and hundreds of thousands have been imprisoned, yet marijuana use is increasing and has regained its status as a symbol of youthful rebellion. Instead of debating the wisdom of our current policies, members of Congress and of the Administration are competing to see who can appear toughest on drugs. For years the war on drugs has been driven by political concerns, without regard to its consequences. But at the state and local levels, where the costs of that war are most keenly felt and unlikely alliances have begun to form, there are signs that madness may give way to common sense.

The Legacy of Len Bias

THE 1986 Anti-Drug Abuse Act marked a profound shift not only in America's drug-control policy but also in the workings of its criminal-justice system. The bill greatly increased the penalties for federal drug offenses. More important, it established mandatory-minimum sentences, transferring power from federal judges to prosecutors. The mandatory minimums were based not on an individual's role in a crime but on the quantity of drugs involved. Judges in such cases could no longer reduce a prison term out of mercy or compassion. Prosecutors were given the authority to decide whether a mandatory-minimum sentence applied.

This new law did not represent the culmination of a careful deliberative process. Nor did it reflect the thinking of the nation's best legal minds. The mandatory-minimum provisions were written and enacted in a matter of weeks without a single public hearing. The most important drug legislation in a generation—the enforcement of which would more than triple the size of the federal-prison population and whose sentencing philosophy would influence state drug laws across the country—was prompted by the death of a popular basketball player shortly before a congressional election.

Len Bias was a local hero in Washington, D.C., clean-cut and all-American, a University of Maryland basketball star who had been drafted by the Boston Celtics at the age of twenty-two. On June 17, 1986, Bias attended a ceremony in Boston to sign a contract with the Celtics. Two days later he died of heart failure, allegedly caused by crack cocaine. When Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill returned to Boston for the Fourth of July congressional recess, everyone seemed to be talking about the death of the Celtics' first-round draft pick. As fears of crack cocaine swept the nation, O'Neill

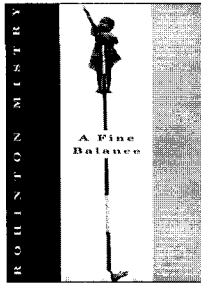
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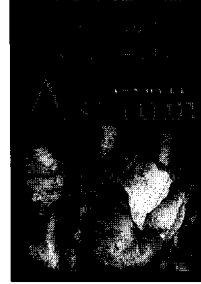
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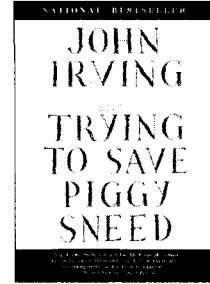


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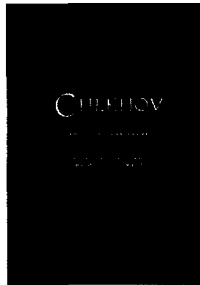
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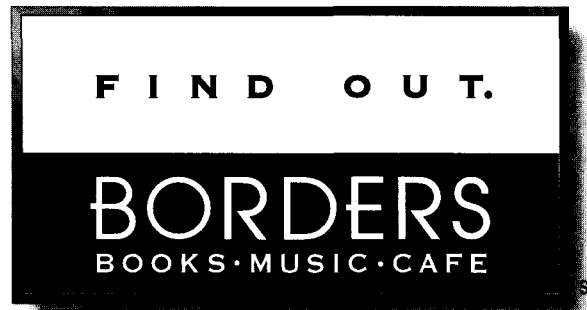


Chekhov: The Complete Plays
Translation by Paul Schmidt
HarperCollins

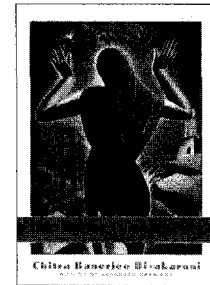
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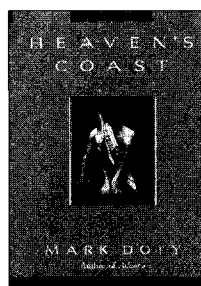
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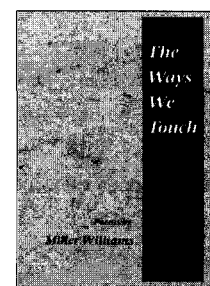
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grew worried that the Democratic Party might be labeled soft on drugs. He returned to Washington in mid-July determined to pass an omnibus drug-control bill before the upcoming election. The legislation had to be drafted within a month. Eric E. Sterling, who was then the assistant counsel for the House Subcommittee on Crime, recently told me that staff members scrambled to assemble a bill. The process of selecting drug quantities to trigger the mandatory-minimum sentences was far from scientific, according to Sterling: "Numbers were being picked out of thin air."

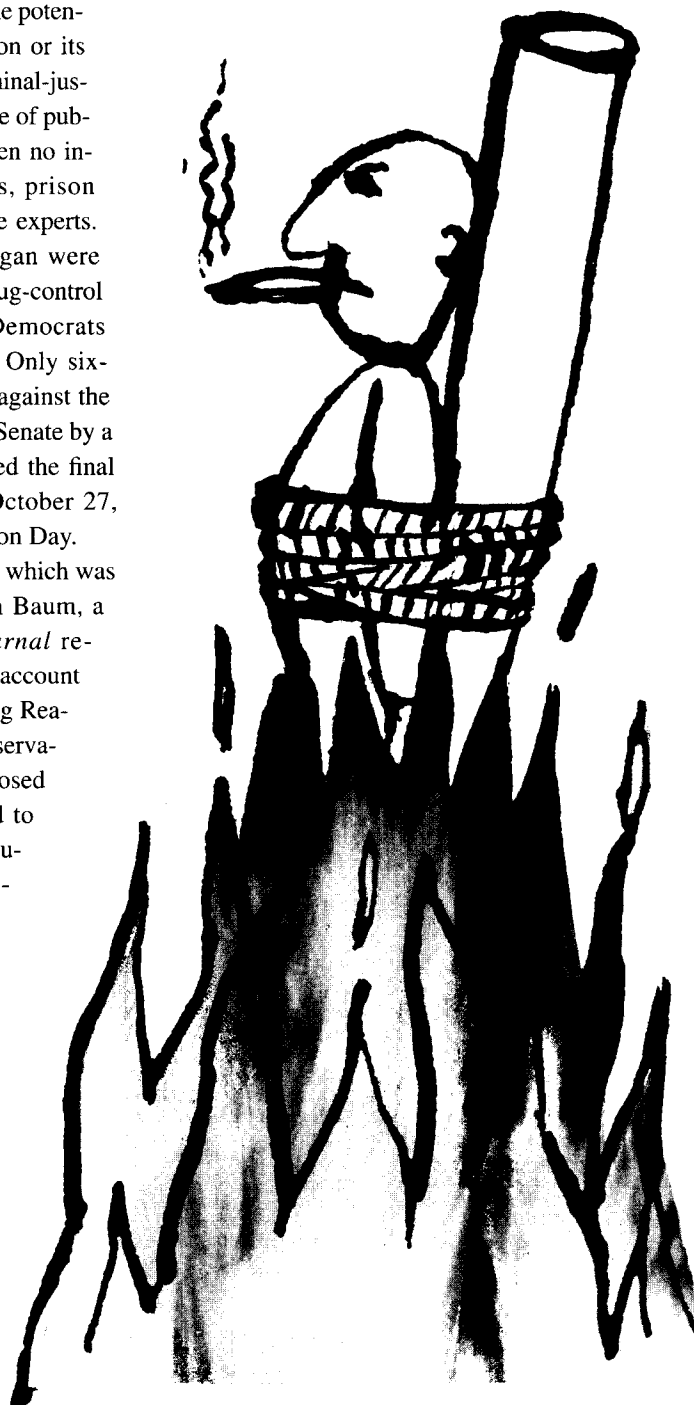
The drug-control bill left the subcommittee in mid-August, while many academics and government officials were away on vacation. There had been little time to study the potential costs of the legislation or its ramifications for the criminal-justice system. In the absence of public hearings there had been no input from federal judges, prison authorities, or drug-abuse experts. President and Mrs. Reagan were calling for tough new drug-control measures, and House Democrats rushed to provide them. Only sixteen congressmen voted against the bill, which passed in the Senate by a voice vote. Reagan signed the final version of the bill on October 27, just a week before Election Day.

In *Smoke and Mirrors*, which was published last year, Dan Baum, a former *Wall Street Journal* reporter, gives a definitive account of the politics surrounding Reagan's war on drugs. Conservative parents' groups opposed to marijuana had helped to ignite the Reagan Revolution. Marijuana symbolized the weakness and permissiveness of a liberal society; it was held responsible for the slovenly appearance of teenagers and their lack of motivation. Carlton Turner, Reagan's first drug czar, believed that marijuana use was inextricably linked to "the present young-adult generation's

involvement in anti-military, anti-nuclear power, anti-big business, anti-authority demonstrations." A public-health approach to drug control was replaced by an emphasis on law enforcement. Drug abuse was no longer considered a form of illness; all drug use was deemed immoral, and punishing drug offenders was thought to be more important than getting them off drugs. The drug war soon became a bipartisan effort, supported by liberals and conservatives alike. Nothing was to be gained politically by defending drug abusers from excessive punishment.

Drug-control legislation was proposed, almost like clock-

work, during every congressional-election year in the 1980s. Election years have continued to inspire bold new drug-control schemes. On September 25 of last year Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich introduced legislation demanding either a life sentence or the death penalty for anyone caught bringing more than two ounces of marijuana into the United States. Gingrich's bill attracted twenty-six co-sponsors, though it failed to reach the House floor. A few months earlier Senator Phil Gramm had proposed denying federal welfare benefits, including food stamps, to anyone convicted of a drug crime, even a misdemeanor. Gramm's proposal was endorsed by a wide variety of senators—including liberals such as Barbara Boxer, Tom Harkin, Patrick Leahy, and Paul Wellstone. A revised version of the amendment, limiting the punishment to people convicted of a drug felony, was incorporated into the welfare bill signed by President Clinton during the presidential campaign. Possessing a few ounces of marijuana is a felony in most states, as is grow-



ing a single marijuana plant. As a result, Americans convicted of a marijuana felony, even if they are disabled, may no longer receive federal welfare or food stamps. Convicted murderers, rapists, and child molesters, however, will continue to receive these benefits.

Forfeitures and Informers

FEDERAL prosecutors now have an extraordinary amount of power in drug cases. A U.S. attorney can determine the eventual punishment for a drug offense by deciding what quantity of drugs to list in the indictment, whether a mandatory-minimum sentence should apply, and whether to press charges at all. Drug offenses differ from most crimes in being subject to federal, state, and local laws. The federal government could prosecute any and every marijuana offender in the United States if it so desired, but in a typical year it charges fewer than one percent of those arrested. By choosing to enter a particular case, a federal prosecutor can greatly affect the penalty for a marijuana crime. In 1985 Donald Clark, a Florida watermelon farmer, was arrested for growing marijuana, convicted under state law, and sentenced to probation. Five years later the local U.S. attorney decided to prosecute Donald Clark under federal law for exactly the

professor at Yale Law School, in some cases a house can be seized if it contains books on marijuana cultivation. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled last year that the government can seize property even when its owner had no involvement in, or knowledge of, the crime that was committed. When property is seized, its legal title passes instantly to the government. The burden of proving its “innocence” falls upon the original owner. In 1994 assets worth roughly \$1.5 billion were forfeited under state and federal laws. In perhaps 80 percent of those cases the owner was never charged with a crime. The forfeiture statutes have deepened the injustice of the war on drugs by enabling wealthy defendants to surrender property in return for shorter sentences; plea-bargain negotiations often turn into haggling sessions worthy of a Middle Eastern souk.

The proceeds from an asset forfeiture are divided among the law-enforcement agencies involved in the case, a policy that invites the abuse of power. Former Justice Department officials have admitted in newspaper interviews that many forfeitures are driven by the need to meet budget projections. The guilt or innocence of a defendant has at times been less important than the availability of his or her assets. In California thirty-one state and federal drug agents raided Donald P. Scott’s 200-acre Malibu ranch on the pretext that marijuana was growing there. Scott was inadvertently killed dur-

ing the raid. No evidence of marijuana cultivation was discovered, and a subsequent investigation by the Ventura County District Attorney’s Office found that the drug agents had been motivated partly by a desire to seize the \$5 million ranch. They had obtained an appraisal of the property weeks before the raid. In New Jersey, Nicholas L. Bissell Jr., a local prosecutor known as the Forfeiture King, helped

POLITICIANS ARE REFUSING TO ADMIT THE TRUE COST OF THE NATION’S DRUG LAWS. “WE’RE NOT BEING HONEST TO THE PUBLIC OR TO OURSELVES,” SAYS STEWART J. GREENLEAF, A PENNSYLVANIA STATE SENATOR WHO WROTE A TOUGH DRUG-SENTENCES LAW THAT HAS FLOODED HIS STATE’S PRISONS WITH LOW-LEVEL OFFENDERS WHO CANNOT BE PAROLED. “THESE LAWS JUST HAVEN’T WORKED AS WE PLANNED.”

same crime. Clark was found guilty and sentenced to life in prison without parole. A Justice Department spokesman quoted in *Smoke and Mirrors* later defended the policy of trying drug offenders twice for the same crime: “The intent is to get the bad guys off the street with apologies to none.”

Under civil forfeiture statutes passed by Congress in the 1980s, the federal government now has the right to seize real estate, vehicles, cash, securities, jewelry, and any other property connected to a marijuana offense. The government need not prove that the property was bought with the proceeds of illegal drug sales, only that it was used—or was intended to be used—in a crime. A yacht can be seized if a single joint is discovered on it. A farm can be seized if a single marijuana plant is found growing there. According to Steven B. Duke, a

an associate to buy land seized in a marijuana case for a small fraction of its market value. In Connecticut, Leslie C. Ohta, a federal prosecutor known as the Queen of Forfeitures, seized the house of Paul and Ruth Derbacher when their twenty-two-year-old grandson was arrested for keeping marijuana there. Although the Derbachers were in their eighties, had owned the house for almost forty years, and had no idea that their grandson kept pot in his room, Ohta insisted upon forfeiture of the house. People should know, she argued, what goes on in their own home. Not long after, Ohta’s eighteen-year-old son was arrested for selling LSD from her Chevrolet Blazer. Allegedly, he had also sold marijuana from her house in Glastonbury. Ohta was quickly transferred out of the U.S. attorney’s forfeiture unit—but

neither her car nor her house was seized by the government.

The only way a defendant can be sure of avoiding a mandatory-minimum sentence under federal law is to plead guilty and give "substantial assistance" in the prosecution of someone else. The willingness to turn informer has become more important to a drug offender's fate than his or her role in a crime. The U.S. attorney, not the judge, decides whether the defendant's cooperation is sufficient to warrant a reduction of the sentence. Although this system helps to avoid expensive trials and provides evidence for future indictments, it also leads to longer prison terms for the minor participants in a drug case. Kingpins have a great deal of information to provide, whereas drug couriers often have none.

A little-known provision of the forfeiture laws rewards confidential informers with up to 25 percent of the assets seized as a result of their testimony. During the 1980s the United States developed a wealthy and industrious class of professional informers. In 1985 the federal government spent \$25 million on informers. Last year it spent more than \$100 million.

Informing on others has become not just a way to avoid punishment but a way of life. In major drug cases an informer can earn a million dollars or more. A recent investigation by the *National Law Journal* found that the proportion of federal search warrants relying exclusively on unidentified informers nearly tripled from 1980 to 1993, increasing from 24 percent to 71 percent. The growing reliance on informers has given an unprecedented degree of influence to criminals who have a direct financial interest in gaining convictions. Informers have been caught framing innocent people. Law-enforcement agents have been caught using nonexistent informers to justify search warrants.

"Criminals are likely to say and do almost anything to get what they want," Stephen S. Trott, a federal judge who was the chief of the Justice Department's Criminal Division during the Reagan years, says in the *National Law Journal*. "This willingness to do anything includes not only truthfully spilling the beans on friends and relatives but also lying, committing perjury, manufacturing evidence, soliciting others to corroborate their lies with more lies, and double-crossing anyone with whom they come into contact, including—and especially—the prosecutor."

The legal and monetary rewards for informing on others have even spawned a whole new business: the buying and selling of drug leads. Defendants who hope to avoid a lengthy mandatory-minimum sentence but who have no valuable information to give prosecutors can now secretly buy information from vendors on the black market. According to Tom Dawson, a prominent Kansas defense attorney, some professional informers now offer their services to defendants in drug cases for fees of up to \$250,000.

Most of the people being imprisoned for marijuana offenses are ordinary Americans without important information to provide, large assets to trade, or the income to pay for high-

priced attorneys. Allen St. Pierre, the deputy director of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws, has spoken to literally thousands of people who have been arrested for pot-related offenses. He receives about a hundred phone calls each week from people who are losing their jobs, losing their houses, feeling desperate for advice. They tend to be working people: house painters, clerks, carpenters, and mechanics. Their cases tend to be handled, or mishandled, by family attorneys with little knowledge of the marijuana laws. America's prisons are full of poor and working-class marijuana offenders.

Children of the upper middle class are rarely sent to prison for marijuana offenses today. Their parents usually enroll them in private drug-treatment programs before trial and hire attorneys who specialize in drug cases. Privileged young men and women are usually treated more leniently in court. The daughter of Judge Rudolph Slate, the man who sentenced Douglas Lamar Gray to life for buying a pound of marijuana, was later arrested for selling the drug. She was granted youthful-offender status. The records in her case have been sealed; most likely she received probation. The son of Indiana Congressman Dan Burton, an outspoken proponent of life sentences for some marijuana-related crimes, was arrested for transporting nearly eight pounds of pot from Louisiana to Indiana in the trunk of his car. Six months later Danny L. Burton II was arrested again, this time at his Indianapolis apartment, where police found thirty marijuana plants and a shotgun with six shells. Federal prosecutors declined to press charges against Burton's son; Indiana prosecutors gained dismissal of the charges against him; and a Louisiana judge sentenced him to community service, probation, and house arrest. As chairman of the House Government Reform and Oversight Committee, Burton is now leading the investigation of ethical lapses in the Clinton Administration. He will not comment on his son's case.

The harshest punishments are given to people who won't cooperate with the government. The pressure to inform on others is immense—as is the cost of resisting it. In 1993 Jodie Israel was arrested for marijuana possession and balked at testifying against her husband, a Rastafarian marijuana trafficker. Federal prosecutors in Montana threatened her with a long prison sentence. Although Israel possessed only eight ounces of marijuana at the time of her arrest, under the broad federal conspiracy laws she could be held liable for many of her husband's crimes. Israel was thirty-one years old, the mother of four young children. She had never before been charged with any crime. Judge Jack Shanstrom warned her in court that without a promise of cooperation "you are not going to see your children for ten plus years." Nevertheless, Israel refused to testify against her husband. She was sentenced to eleven years in federal prison without parole. Her husband was sentenced to twenty-nine years without parole. Her children were scattered among various relatives.



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"A Matter of Practicality"

IN 1988 State Senator Stewart J. Greenleaf wrote the bill that made tough mandatory-minimum drug sentences part of Pennsylvania law. Greenleaf, a Republican from rural Montgomery County, is now the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee in Pennsylvania—and an outspoken critic of mandatory-minimum sentences. "These laws just haven't worked as we planned," he now admits. Politicians are refusing to acknowledge the true cost of the nation's drug laws. "We're not being honest," Greenleaf says, "to the public or to ourselves."

In adopting mandatory-minimum sentences, Pennsylvania had simply followed the federal government's lead, aiming to give long prison terms to major drug dealers. Instead the state's prisons have been flooded with low-level drug offenders who cannot be paroled. Over the past decade the state's prison population has doubled. Its prison system is now operating at 54 percent above capacity. In order to keep pace with the current rate of incarceration, Pennsylvania will have to open a new prison every ninety days. Each new prison cell costs about \$110,000 to build and about \$25,000 a year to maintain. At the moment nearly 70 percent of the inmates in Pennsylvania's prisons are nonviolent offenders. Convicted murderers granted early release have gone on a number of well-publicized killing sprees. "Expensive prison space must be held for those who are truly violent or career criminals," Greenleaf has come to believe. "This problem has transcended party lines and social ideologies; it is a matter of practicality and fiscal responsibility."

As prisons become more and more overcrowded, state legislators across the country are exploring a wide range of alternative sentences. At least half a dozen states now allow low-level drug offenders to avoid prison terms by entering drug-treatment programs. In Pennsylvania, where perhaps 80 percent of all crimes are being committed by either alcohol or drug abusers, the state District Attorneys Association and the local chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union both advocate emphasizing substance-abuse treatment rather than imprisonment. Greenleaf favors treatment programs, intensive probation, and ninety-day "shock incarceration" in jail or boot camps for most drug offenders—alternatives that are far less expensive than sending people to prison. Although he worries about the political fallout from his stance, he will not budge. "We have to be smart about

whom we incarcerate," Greenleaf says, "and not waste taxpayers' money."

The trend toward alternative sentences for drug offenders has lately gained support in some unexpected quarters. Arizona's recently passed Proposition 200 not only allows the medicinal use of marijuana but also has reformed the state's approach to drug control. Since the early 1980s Arizona had aggressively pursued a drug strategy of "zero tolerance," administering harsh punishments for illegal drug use, not just for drug trafficking and possession. Failing a urine test was grounds for prosecution in Arizona: a person could face criminal charges in Phoenix for a joint smoked in Philadelphia days or even weeks before. Arizona's prisons grew overcrowded, and tent cities rose in the desert to house inmates. Proposition 200 declared that "drug abuse is a public health problem" and vowed to "medicalize" the state's drug-control policy. In order to free up prison cells for violent offenders, the initiative called for the immediate release of all nonviolent prisoners who had been convicted of drug possession or use. It called for drug treatment, drug education, and community service instead of prison terms for nonviolent minor drug offenders. And it called for the creation of a state Drug Treatment and Education Fund through an increased tax on alcohol and tobacco. Proposition 200 was en-

POT DEALERS ARE BEING GIVEN LIFE SENTENCES WHILE VIOLENT OFFENDERS ARE BEING RELEASED EARLY. IN 1980 THERE WERE ALMOST TWICE AS MANY VIOLENT OFFENDERS IN FEDERAL PRISON AS DRUG OFFENDERS. TODAY THERE ARE FAR MORE PEOPLE IN FEDERAL PRISON FOR MARIJUANA CRIMES THAN FOR VIOLENT CRIMES. MORE PEOPLE ARE NOW INCARCERATED FOR MARIJUANA THAN FOR MANSLAUGHTER OR RAPE.

dorsed by aging hippies, former members of the Reagan Administration, the retired Democratic senator Dennis DeConcini, and the retired Republican senator Barry Goldwater, among others. On Election Day, Arizona voters backed the initiative by a margin of two to one. But the Clinton Administration attacked Proposition 200 as though it were a dangerous heresy, threatening to block its implementation and to prosecute any physicians who recommend marijuana to their patients. Clinton's drug czar, Barry McCaffrey, called the Arizona initiative a subterfuge, part of "a national strategy to legalize drugs."

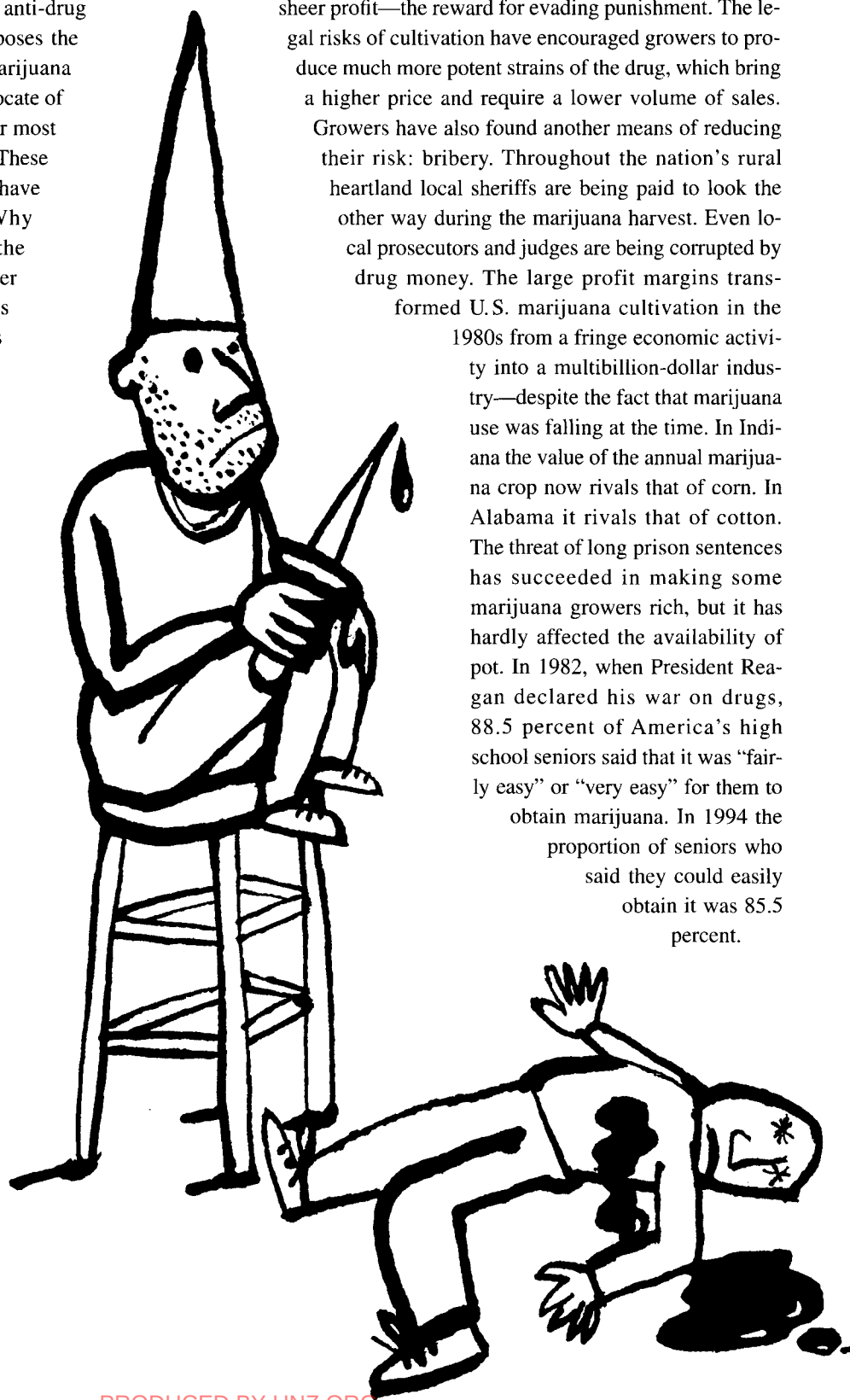
While the Administration escalates the war on marijuana, law-enforcement officers on the front lines are beginning to question some of its tactics. Steve White served with the

Drug Enforcement Administration and its predecessor, the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, for twenty-eight years before his retirement, last year. Twenty-three of those years were spent working undercover in Indiana, mainly tracking down marijuana growers. Under White's leadership the Cannabis Eradication Program arrested more pot growers every year in Indiana than were arrested in just about any other state. White strongly condemns marijuana use and gives anti-drug lectures at high schools. But he opposes the long prison terms that first-time marijuana growers now receive. "I'm a big advocate of alternative sentencing," he says. "For most pot growers, prison isn't the answer. These aren't violent people. They usually have jobs, and homes, and children. Why make their families a burden to the community?" White has learned over the years that marijuana growers come from all sorts of backgrounds and possess a variety of skills. "Put them to work, make them do community service," he suggests. "Prison terms only strengthen their anti-establishment views." Most commercial marijuana growers will quit the business after being caught once or twice. White feels little sympathy, however, for the unrepentant growers who are motivated by big money and the thrill of breaking the law. After a third conviction for large-scale marijuana cultivation, he thinks, alternative sentences should no longer apply. "Make prison a real pleasant place," White says, "and keep those guys in there forever."

The long prison sentences now given to marijuana offenders have turned marijuana—a hardy weed that grows wild in all fifty states—into a precious commodity. Some marijuana is currently worth more per ounce than gold. A decade ago the policy analysts Peter Reuter and Mark A. R. Kleiman observed that the price of an illegal drug is determined not only by its supply,

demand, and production costs but also by the legal risks of selling it. As the risks increase, so does the profit. This theory has been supported by the huge rise in marijuana prices since the latest war on drugs began. In 1982 the street price for an ounce (adjusted for inflation) was about \$75. By 1992 it had reached about \$325. Although the costs of cultivating marijuana rose somewhat during that period, most of the 333 percent price increase represented sheer profit—the reward for evading punishment. The legal risks of cultivation have encouraged growers to produce much more potent strains of the drug, which bring a higher price and require a lower volume of sales. Growers have also found another means of reducing their risk: bribery. Throughout the nation's rural heartland local sheriffs are being paid to look the other way during the marijuana harvest. Even local prosecutors and judges are being corrupted by drug money. The large profit margins transformed U.S. marijuana cultivation in the

1980s from a fringe economic activity into a multibillion-dollar industry—despite the fact that marijuana use was falling at the time. In Indiana the value of the annual marijuana crop now rivals that of corn. In Alabama it rivals that of cotton. The threat of long prison sentences has succeeded in making some marijuana growers rich, but it has hardly affected the availability of pot. In 1982, when President Reagan declared his war on drugs, 88.5 percent of America's high school seniors said that it was "fairly easy" or "very easy" for them to obtain marijuana. In 1994 the proportion of seniors who said they could easily obtain it was 85.5 percent.



The Benefits of Decriminalization

HARRY J. Anslinger headed the Federal Bureau of Narcotics during the 1930s and supervised the campaign to make marijuana illegal under state and federal laws. In "Marijuana: Assassin of Youth" and similar articles Anslinger led readers to believe that the drug rendered its users homicidal, suicidal, and insane. Amid the anxieties of the Great Depression, marijuana use was linked to poor Mexicans and blacks, "inferior" races whose alleged sexual promiscuity and violence stemmed partly from smoking pot. "The dominant race and most enlightened countries are alcoholic," one opponent of marijuana use claimed, expressing a widely held belief, "whilst the races and nations addicted to hemp . . . have deteriorated both mentally and physically." Marijuana was the "killer weed," a foreign influence on American life that was capable of transforming healthy teenagers into sex-crazed maniacs. Anslinger later admitted to the historian David F. Musto that the FBN had somewhat exaggerated the dangers of marijuana. Anslinger had hoped to make marijuana seem so awful and so terrifying that young people would be afraid to try it even once.

Marijuana's "un-American" reputation has made it immensely appealing to rebellious, disaffected youth. Lurid propaganda films like *Reefer Madness*, *Devil's Harvest*, and *Marijuana: Weed With Roots in Hell*, which promised a glimpse of not only the horrors but also the "weird orgies" caused by the drug, no doubt encouraged more than one brave soul to take a puff. The huge difference between the alleged and the actual effects of marijuana has long provided young people with grounds for distrusting authority. Praised by rebels and artists as diverse as Cab Calloway, Jack Kerouac, Arlo Guthrie, and Snoop Doggie Dog, marijuana has attained a lofty symbolic importance. A distinct culture has evolved around marijuana, one championed by proud outcasts. The laws aimed at that culture have only perpetuated it, enshrining the cannabis leaf as a symbol of adolescent protest.

In 1970 President Richard Nixon appointed a commission to study the health effects, legal status, and social impact of marijuana use. After more than a year of research the National Commission on Marijuana and Drug Abuse concluded that marijuana should be decriminalized under state and federal laws. The commission unanimously agreed that the possession of small amounts of marijuana in the home should no longer be a crime. "Recognizing the extensive degree of misinformation about marijuana as a drug, we have tried to *demythologize* it," the commission explained. "Viewing the use of marijuana in its wider social context, we have tried to *desymbolize* it." The commission argued that society should strongly discourage marijuana use while devoting more resources to preventing and treating heavy use. "Considering the range of social concerns in con-

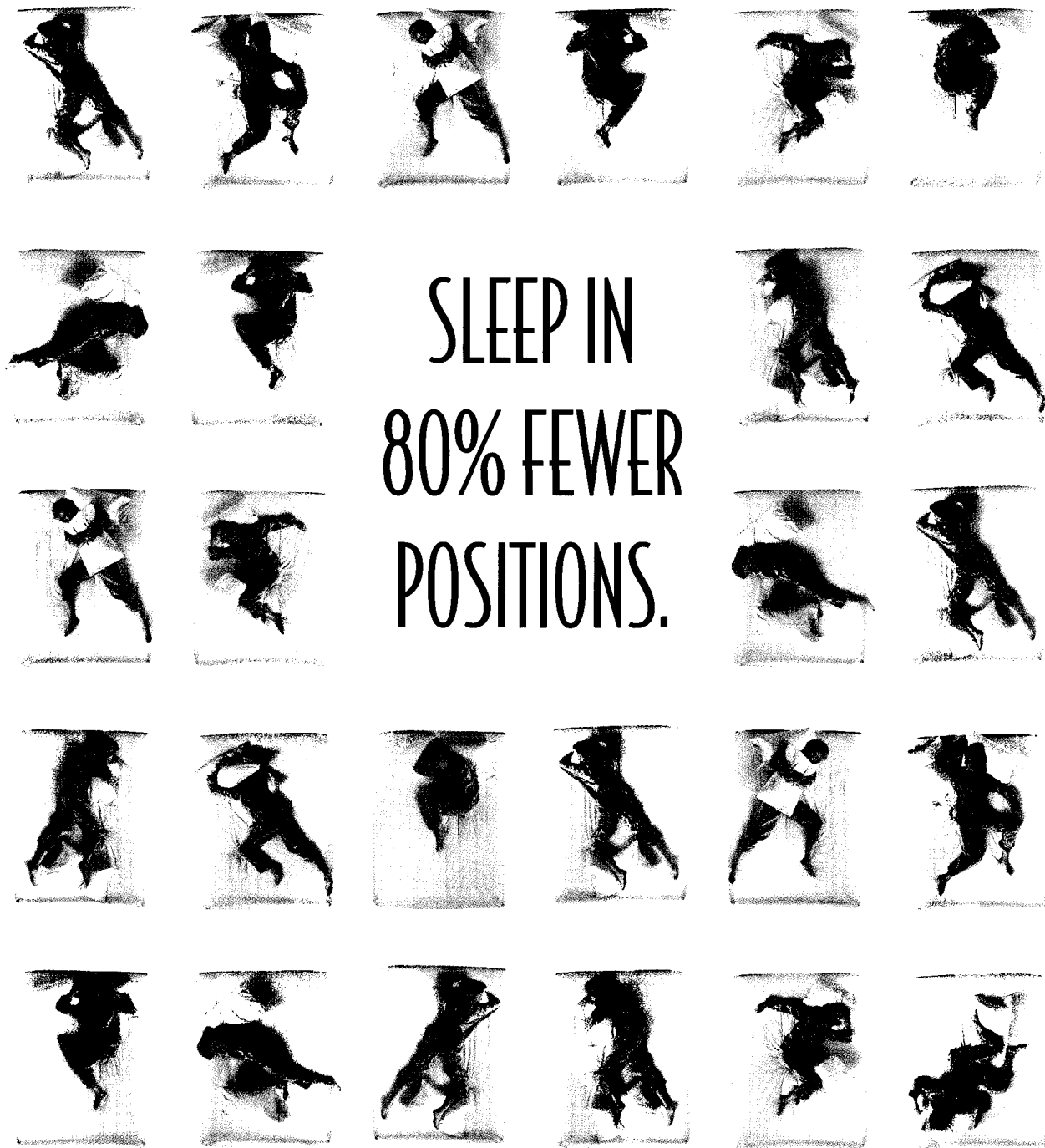
temporary America," it said, "marijuana does not, in our considered judgment, rank very high."

President Nixon felt betrayed by the commission and rejected its findings. A decade later the National Academy of Sciences studied the health effects of marijuana and concluded that it should be decriminalized, a finding that President Reagan rejected. Nevertheless, ten states have largely decriminalized marijuana possession, thereby saving billions of dollars in court and prison costs—without experiencing an increase in marijuana use. Ohio currently has the most liberal marijuana laws in the nation: possession of up to three ounces is a misdemeanor punishable by a \$100 fine. In July of last year, with little fanfare, Ohio decriminalized the cultivation of small amounts of marijuana for personal use. The change in the laws was backed by the state's conservative Republican governor, George V. Voinovich.

There seems to be little correlation between the severity of a nation's marijuana laws and the rate of use among its teenagers. In the United Kingdom, where drug penalties are harshly enforced, the rate of marijuana use among fifteen- and sixteen-year-olds is the highest in Western Europe—one and a half times the rate in Spain and the Netherlands, where the drug has been decriminalized. The UK rate is six times as high as the rate in Sweden, a nation that has single-mindedly pursued a public-health approach to drug control. Sweden now has the lowest rate of marijuana use in Western Europe. Under Swedish law the maximum punishment for most marijuana traffickers is a prison term of three years.

Cultural factors exert far more influence on a country's rate of marijuana use than any changes in the law. The Netherlands decriminalized marijuana in 1976—and yet teenage use there declined by as much as 40 percent over the next decade. The rate of use among American teenagers peaked in 1979 and had already fallen by 40 percent when Congress passed the Anti-Drug Abuse Act, in 1986. As young Americans became more health conscious, their use of alcohol and tobacco also declined. Since 1979 the rate of alcohol use among American teenagers has fallen by 52 percent—without any life sentences for selling beer.

The conclusions of the National Commission on Marijuana and Drug Abuse are as valid today as they were twenty-five years ago: the United States should decriminalize marijuana for personal use; possessing small amounts of it should no longer be a crime; growing or selling it commercially, using it in public, distributing it to young people, and driving under its influence should remain strictly forbidden. The decriminalization of marijuana—including, as in the Ohio model, the cultivation of small amounts—could be the first step toward a rational and sensible drug-control policy. The benefits would be felt immediately. Law-enforcement resources would be diverted from the apprehension and imprisonment of marijuana offenders to the prevention of much more serious crimes. The roughly \$2.4 billion the United States spends annually just to

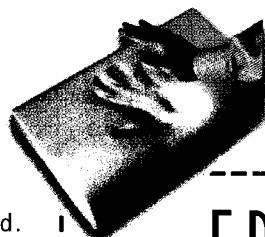


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process its marijuana arrests would be available to fund more-useful endeavors, such as treatment for drug education and substance abuse. Thousands of prison cells would become available to house violent criminals. The profits from growing and selling marijuana commercially would fall, as would the incentive to bribe public officials. But the decriminalization of marijuana is only a partial solution to the havoc caused by the war on drugs. Mandatory-minimum sentences for drug offenders should be repealed, allowing judges to regain their time-honored powers and ensuring that an individual's punishment fits the crime. The asset-forfeiture laws should be amended so that criminal investigations are not motivated by greed—so that assets can be forfeited only after a conviction, in amounts proportionate to the illegal activity. The use of professional informers should be limited and carefully monitored. The message sent to the nation's teenagers by these steps would be that our society will no longer pursue a failed policy and needlessly ruin lives in order to appear tough.

Decriminalizing marijuana would also help to resolve the current dispute over its medicinal use. Seriously ill patients would no longer risk criminal prosecution while trying to obtain their medicine. Although heavy marijuana use may exacerbate underlying psychological problems and may harm the respiratory system through the inhalation of smoke, marijuana is one of the least toxic therapeutically active substances known. No fatal dose of the drug has been established, despite more than 5,000 years of recorded use. Marijuana is less toxic than many common foods. Denying cancer patients, AIDS patients, and paraplegics access to a potentially useful medicine that is safer than most legally prescribed drugs is inhumane. Some of the claims made in the 1970s and 1980s

about the effects of marijuana—that it causes brain damage, chromosome damage, sterility, infertility, and even homosexuality—have never been proved. Marijuana use may pose dangers that are still unknown. And yet the British medical journal *The Lancet*, in a recent editorial calling for the decriminalization of marijuana, felt confident enough to declare, "The smoking of cannabis, even long-term, is not harmful to health."

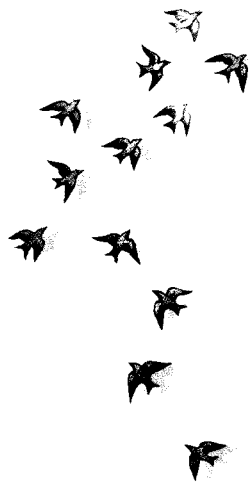
Although marijuana does not turn teenagers into serial killers or irreversibly destroy their brains, it should not be smoked by young people. Marijuana is a powerful intoxicant, and its use can diminish academic and athletic performance. Adolescents experience enough social and emotional confusion without the added handicap of being stoned. If marijuana use does indeed exert subtly harmful effects on the repro-

ductive and immune systems, young people could be at greatest risk. Lying to teenagers about marijuana's effects, however, only encourages them to doubt official warnings about much more dangerous drugs, such as heroin, cocaine, and amphetamines. The drug culture of the 1960s arose in the midst of tough anti-drug laws and simplistic anti-drug propaganda. In a nation where both major political parties accept millions of dollars from alcohol and tobacco lobbyists, demands for "zero tolerance" and moral condemnations of marijuana have a hollow ring. According to Michael D. Newcomb, a substance-abuse expert at the University of Southern California, "Tobacco and alcohol are the most widely used, abused, and deadly drugs ingested by teenagers." Eighth-graders in America today drink alcohol three times as often as they use marijuana. Drug-education programs should respect the intelligence of young people by promoting drug-free lives without scare tactics, lies, and hypocrisy. And drug abuse should be treated like alcoholism or nicotine addiction. These are health problems suffered by Americans of every race, creed, and political affiliation, not grounds for imprisonment or the denial of property rights.

At the Alabama penitentiary where Douglas Lamar Gray is imprisoned, perhaps half a dozen inmates are serving life without parole for marijuana offenses. One was given a life

THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON MARIJUANA AND DRUG ABUSE ARE AS VALID TODAY AS TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO: THE UNITED STATES SHOULD DECRIMINALIZE MARIJUANA FOR PERSONAL USE AND THE POSSESSION OF SMALL AMOUNTS OF IT; GROWING OR SELLING IT COMMERCIALY, USING IT IN PUBLIC, DISTRIBUTING IT TO YOUNG PEOPLE, AND DRIVING UNDER ITS INFLUENCE SHOULD REMAIN STRICTLY FORBIDDEN.

sentence for loading his pickup truck with ditchweed, a form of wild marijuana that is not psychoactive. Another was given a life sentence for possessing a single joint. Hundreds of inmates may be serving life sentences for marijuana-related offenses in prisons across the United States. The pointless misery extends from these inmates to their families and to the victims of every crime committed by violent offenders who might otherwise occupy those prison cells. A society that punishes marijuana crimes more severely than violent crimes is caught in the grip of a deep psychosis. For too long the laws regarding marijuana have been based on racial prejudice, irrational fears, metaphors, symbolism, and political expediency. The time has come for a marijuana policy calmly based on the facts. ☸



POEMS

by

W. S. MERWIN



ANOTHER RIVER

The friends have gone home far up the valley
of that river into whose estuary
the man from England sailed in his own age
in time to catch sight of the late forests
furring in black the remotest edges
of the majestic water always it
appeared to me that he arrived just as
an evening was beginning and toward the end
of summer when the converging surface
lay as a single vast mirror gazing
upward into the pearl light that was
already stained with the first saffron
of sunset on which the high wavering trails
of migrant birds flowed southward as though there were
no end to them the wind had dropped and the tide
and the current for a moment seemed to hang
still in balance and the creaking and knocking
of wood stopped all at once and the known voices
died away and the smells and rocking
and starvation of the voyage had become
a sleep behind them as they lay becalmed
on the reflection of their Half Moon
while the sky blazed and then the tide lifted them
up the dark passage they had no name for

ECHOING LIGHT

When I was beginning to read I imagined
that bridges had something to do with birds
and with what seemed to be cages but I knew
that they were not cages it must have been autumn
with the dusty light flashing from the streetcar wires
and those orange places on fire in the pictures
and now indeed it is autumn the clear
days not far from the sea with a small wind nosing
over dry grass that yesterday was green
the empty corn standing trembling and a down
of ghost flowers veiling the ignored fields
and everywhere the colors I cannot take
my eyes from all of them red even the wide streams
red it is the season of migrants
flying at night feeling the turning earth
beneath them and I woke in the city hearing
the call notes of the plover then again and
again before I slept and here far downriver
flocking together echoing close to the shore
the longest bridges have opened their slender wings

REMEMBERING

There are threads of old sound heard over and over
phrases of Shakespeare or Mozart the slender
wands of the auroras playing out from them
into dark time the passing of a few
migrants high in the night far from the ancient flocks
far from the rest of the words far from the instruments



Citrus Preserved

*Marmalade is a work of art
that anyone can create—and with more
ease than you may think*

HOME canning once struck me as remote and quaint—far too time-consuming to contemplate actually doing, and with the element of risk that the jars would be inadequately sterilized and I'd poison both myself and the recipients of my lovingly home-made gifts. Besides, if I wanted to store something particularly ripe and seasonal, I had the unquaint freezer. Late one summer I found myself alone at a friend's California house with exceptional tomatoes going to waste in the garden, an unopened box of canning jars in the pantry, and a deadline waiting in the study. The whole enterprise took

by Corby Kummer

on sudden allure. It turned out to be remarkably, even disappointingly, easy.

The question before anyone thinking of "putting food by," as the title of an authoritative manual has it, remains this: Wouldn't it be easier—and just as satisfactory—to go to the store? If the food in question is something you've grown yourself, objectivity is impossible. If, however, the food is bought, considerations of time and shelf space come into play.

In many experiments with marmalade over two winters, I decided that for citrus it's worth it. The flavor is brighter, sharper, and more distinct than it is in mar-

malade you can buy. (Terminology is loose, but the general distinction is that jellies are made from juice alone, jams include crushed fruit, and marmalades include citrus rind. Preserves are whole fruit or chunks of fruit in syrup, and conserves include nuts, spices, and other oddments.) You can actually tell what fruit you're eating—not always possible with marmalades from even the most homestyle-seeming producers—and even though you're using pounds of sugar at a time, the taste of the finished marmalade will be much less cloying.

Also, lemon marmalade is scarce. Indeed, I never tasted lemon marmalade until I made it. After one spoonful I realized that whatever the dictates of tradition, oranges were expendable. (The name "marmalade" didn't originally refer to citrus anyway; it derives instead from a word for quince, another tart fruit that home cooks boil with sugar.) My revelation came in another house, as I avoided another deadline, with a lemon tree outside the kitchen window; it was confirmed at home, where I used the wonderfully sweet Meyer lemons, thanks to Diamond Organics, which ships them

year-round (the number is 800-922-2396). Meyer lemons, which grow in many California back yards, are thin-skinned and almost seedless, with a clean, only lightly acidic flavor. Their two peak seasons are the early fall—and now.

I was lucky in my choice of gardens: tomatoes and citrus provide easy and safe introductions to home canning, because both are high in acid, which naturally retards the growth of most micro-organisms. (Pickling is the commonest way to home-can vegetables, not because so many cooks love vinegar but because it renders low-acid vegetables safe.) Sugar, too, retards bacteria, because it chemically binds with water and ties up a natural medium for growth; it's safe to eat most jellies (and honey) long after it might be wise to throw out other bottled foods. In sweet home-canned goods the goal is to make something that jells, lest you bottle syrup. This can be a very tricky matter for many fruits. Acid, sugar, and pectin determine the "setting" point, and luckily marmalade is high in all three. Commercial pectin is usually made, in fact, from the pith (the white part of the rind) of citrus fruits.

Most marmalades, then, will jell readily and pose little danger of spoilage—if you use the classic proportion of one part sugar to one part fruit. Low-sugar preserves require the addition of commercial pectin, which makes for complications, and low-sugar marmalade is also subject to fermentation. After experimenting with reducing the proportion of sugar for fruits that seemed sweet and raising it for particularly sour ones, I came to the convenient (and to me surprising) conclusion that one to one always produces the clearest and best flavor.

This ratio is by weight: in home canning, as in serious baking, a kitchen scale is essential. So is a thermometer, to remove anxiety from the decision of when the marmalade is done. Either a jelly or a deep-fat-frying thermometer will serve; most hardware stores sell them for a few dollars. You don't need a special preserving kettle, attractive as the tinned copper ones are, with their slightly flaring sides and curved, swinging handles. Any heavy-bottomed pan wider than it is deep, so as to encourage fast evaporation, will do. Canning jars with screw-top metal lids—easier to manage, if less appealing, than jars with

clamping glass lids—are available at most supermarkets and hardware stores.

Small batches are always more manageable: the preparation is easier, and so is bringing the marmalade to the setting point. As the writer Jeanne Lesem points out in her concise and informative *Preserving Today*, most of us do "not need or want . . . dozens of jars of anything." Still, there's no better gift than a jar of your own marmalade. Don't lose the decorative labels that come in most boxes of jars—they're necessary for pride of authorship.

THE British are the world's masters of marmalade, and they have evolved many ways to make it. Guided by the nonsense voice of May Byron, whose *Jams and Jellies* was published in England in 1917 (Dover reprinted it in 1975), I tried them all, and boiled the techniques down (sorry) to three: what I call whole-fruit, cut-rind, and shredded-zest.

Several principles became clear. The first is that the fruit should be cooked until completely tender before the sugar is added. Sugar can toughen rind, and the goal of the long soaking that English recipes often call for—one, two, even three days—is to soften the fruit and release pectin into the water. You can soften the rind by simmering it for an hour, and inadequate pectin won't be a problem with any of the methods I recommend.

The second principle is that the sugar should be heated before you add it, which greatly shortens the time required to reach the setting point. ("This is a fact but rarely known," Byron says. "Remember that it is the *fruit* which requires cooking; the sugar only needs to dissolve," and the mixture to thicken.) There's no trick to heating sugar. Spread it in a baking pan, foil-lined for greater ease, and leave it on the middle rack of a low oven (275–300°) for fifteen or twenty minutes.

You can vary the fruit according to what you find at the market: weighing the fruit, water, and sugar liberates you from worrying about whether the citrus at hand is the right size or juicy enough. The best oranges for marmalade are bitter, or sour, oranges, which contain many pectin-rich seeds and are nearly as tart as lemons. The English call them Seville, for the Spanish region of Andalusia where in the sixth and seventh centuries conquering Moors created vast orange

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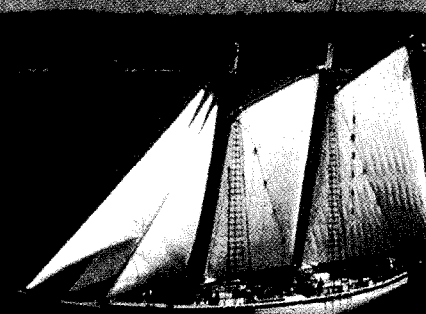
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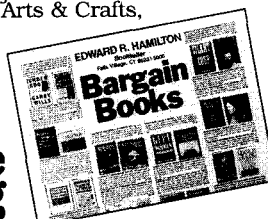
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plantations. For a thousand years, until the Portuguese imported sweet oranges from their colonies in India, all European oranges were bitter. (Classic dishes like duck à l'orange and crêpes Suzette were created for bitter oranges, which, like all oranges, are thought to have originated in China.) Today bitter oranges (*Citrus aurantium*) are extremely hard to find, and their season is short—usually from mid-January to mid-February. In Spain they are grown chiefly for the British marmalade market; occasionally you can find them in fancy-fruit and whole-food stores in the United States.

Sweet oranges (*Citrus sinensis*) are often seedless, but their thick pith makes up for the pectin lost in seeds. They work fine for marmalade as long as you include lemons to counteract their sweetness. Both "juice" and Valencia oranges are cheaper, higher in useful seeds, and often less overwhelmingly sweet than navel oranges; sourish tangerines, which often contain many seeds, are also excellent in marmalade, as are limes, if you like them. Blood oranges, with a purplish interior, are now grown in California (Sunkist calls them "moro" on the label) and are available in many supermarkets during their late-winter season, which extends into early spring; they have a winey, lightly tart flavor and make a lovely garnet-colored marmalade.

"Three-fruit" marmalade usually refers to orange, lemon, and grapefruit. I avoid grapefruit, because I find it domineering and so thick with pith that the final flavor is too bitter unless you cut most of the pith away beforehand. Yet I covet the pithy citron, a citrus that looks like a big, bumpy lemon, whose aggressively pungent flavor is familiar as one of the candied rinds in the dreaded fruitcake. It is grown in California chiefly for use in Jewish festivals (the Hebrew name is *etrog*; call Lindcove Ranch, at 209-732-3422, to see if citron is available). The essential two fruits for classic marmalade are oranges and lemons, in a ratio of roughly three to one. Beyond that it's up to you.

BY far the easiest method of marmalade making requires no initial peeling or slicing at all, and produces what Jane Grigson, whose writing gives me the pleasure others find in Jane Austen, called in *Jane Grigson's Fruit Book*

"the simplest, easiest, best-flavoured marmalade." Whole-fruit marmalade is fool-proof, because it contains all the fruit's pith, and the seeds release their pectin during the boiling. It has the deepest flavor and darkest color of any kind, and is the closest to Dundee or "Oxford-cut" marmalade, with the definite taste of rind.

Whichever fruit you use, be sure to scrub the peels in warm water with a clean scrub brush (organic fruit is of course preferable for the absence of any chemical treatment). Boil the whole fruit in water to cover until it is very tender when pierced with a fork—from one to one and a half hours. Lift out the fruit and weigh it, reserving the water; set an equal weight of sugar to warm in a low oven. Halve the fruit and cut it into whatever shape you prefer—thin slices or quarter-inch cubes are usual. The cooked and halved fruit can be chopped by pulsing it in a food processor, but I prefer cutting by hand, which goes quickly and allows you to determine the shape; also, a few pulses too many will produce puree. You can pick out the seeds as you go, but it isn't essential—they will float to the surface when you boil the fruit and sugar, and are easily skimmed off.

Now comes the marmalade part. Bring the chopped fruit and an equal weight of the cooking water to a boil in a wide, shallow pan and add the warmed sugar. Boil hard uncovered, stirring to prevent sticking, and skimming off any scum and seeds, until a thermometer reads 220°F or (as is easier to see on most thermometers) 105°C. Technically the setting point is seven degrees Fahrenheit above the boiling point, which varies depending on altitude. It can take long, watched minutes of boiling for the mercury to rise each of the last seven (or eight, to be safe) degrees. If you have heated the sugar in advance and you divide the batch so that you boil only four to six cups in one pan, the climb shouldn't take more than twenty or thirty minutes.

As the marmalade approaches doneness, it thickens and darkens. Non-thermometer tests for doneness include the spoon, or "sheet," test: when poured from a wide spoon held six to twelve inches above the pan, the liquid will slowly combine into one stream, or sheet, rather than dripping in two or three rivulets. Or you can try the saucer, or "wrinkle," test: put two teaspoons or so of marmalade

onto a cold saucer and leave it in the freezer for five minutes. It's ready if when you push it with your thumb, the surface wrinkles. I've come to rely on this easy test to confirm that enough evaporation has occurred after the mixture has reached the right temperature.

Whole-fruit marmalade sets like a dream, almost before it cools—other homemade marmalades can take at least a day to set, exposed to air. (You needn't be alarmed if marmalade in a jar remains loose, since the final boiling to sterilize it drives the air out of the jars.) The trade-off for the ease and guaranteed jell of whole-fruit marmalade is a somewhat murky appearance; the jelly is cloudy rather than clear, and is often flecked with white dots from the pith. But the bitter undertone of pith is a flavor many marmalade fanciers consider absolutely essential. You can accentuate it by substituting brown sugar for a third to half of the weight of the sugar. Sliced fresh ginger or pieces of candied ginger are also good additions.

The cut-rind method results in a less complex but purer fruit taste, with a lighter color and clear jelly. Cut-rind marmalade is looser than whole-fruit, but I prefer its cleaner, more staccato flavor.

Scrub the fruit and juice it, scraping out each juiced half and reserving all the seeds and pulp. Slice the rind into pieces of the size you prefer. Turn out the reserved pulp and seeds onto a doubled square of cheesecloth and tie it closed. Weigh the rind with the bundle and add enough water to the juice to bring it to an equal weight. Simmer the rind and the bundle in the liquid in a pot tall and narrow enough for the rind to remain submerged. Cook until the rind is completely tender—about forty-five minutes to an hour. Twenty minutes or so before it is done, heat an equal weight of sugar. When the rind is cooked, remove the bag, scraping off any bits of rind, and squeeze it gently over the pot. Add the heated sugar and boil until thick.

The purest flavor of all results from first removing the zest (the colored part of the rind) with a potato peeler or a sharp knife and slicing it into shreds or small squares, and then paring away and discarding the pith. This is the best way to showcase the delicate flavor of, say, blood oranges—or Meyer lemons. Be sure that lemons for an all-lemon mar-

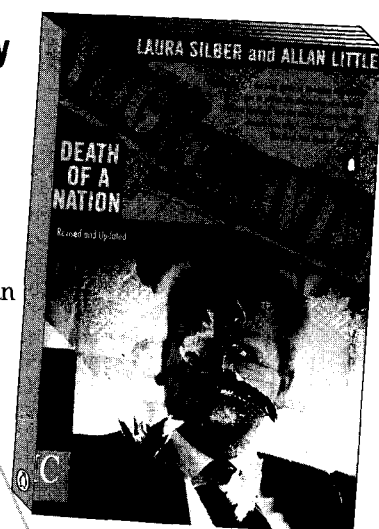
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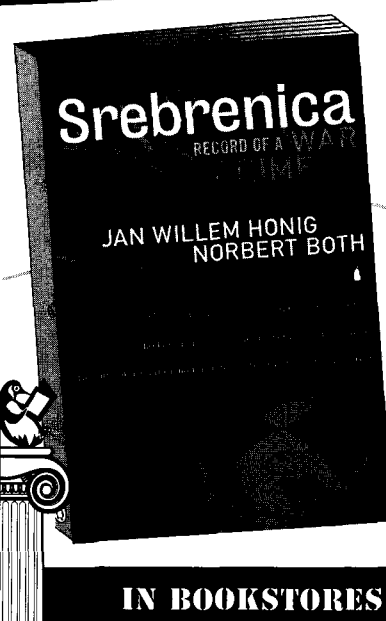
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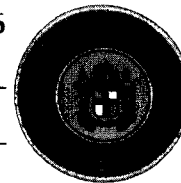
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marmalade are fresh; the riper any fruit is, the less pectin it contains. I follow the cut-rind method, simmering the shredded zest and the sliced flesh with an equal weight of water for about forty minutes, adding an equal weight of heated sugar, and boiling it hard for several minutes after the thermometer says it's ready—with lemon marmalade small batches and fast evaporation seem particularly important to ensure a jell. The zest of Meyer lemons is a pleasure to remove and cut, and the intense, perfumed flavor is incomparable. I can't wait to spread lemon marmalade on a (bought) sponge-cake shell and top it with the season's first berries and whipped cream.

CANNING need not cause anxiety. Straightforward instructions, sometimes even with pictures, appear right on the boxes of jars, and any number of books contain reassuring information. My favorite is *Preserving Today*, which is about to be reprinted in paperback; Edon Waycott's *Preserving the Taste* has useful prefatory material. *Clearly Delicious*, by Elisabeth Lambert Ortiz, is an oversized picture book that is surprisingly substantial, with excellent recipes.

A few tips the canning instructions sometimes leave out: Use the biggest pot you own, and put a folded dish towel or, preferably, a terry-cloth towel at the bottom, to keep the jars from rattling against one another (the cloth won't burn, and terry cloth stays put). Before filling the boiled, sterilized jars, let cooked marmalade rest for ten minutes so that the peel won't sink to the bottom; when it's ready you'll see a skin on the surface that will ripple at a touch. Boiling-hot glass is far more fragile than cool glass, so resist the urge to shift the position of the jars in the boiling water, and lift them out carefully onto a clean towel (never onto cold metal). Thick rubber gloves give you a surer grip than the tongs most books recommend.

I've found that marmalade isn't balanced and ready to eat for at least a month (store jars in a cool, dark place). They say that all jams should be consumed within a year, but when I recently tasted last year's marmalade, I found it even better for the aging—stronger, with a marvelously fresh flavor. But then, by that time I practically felt as if I had grown the fruit myself. ☼

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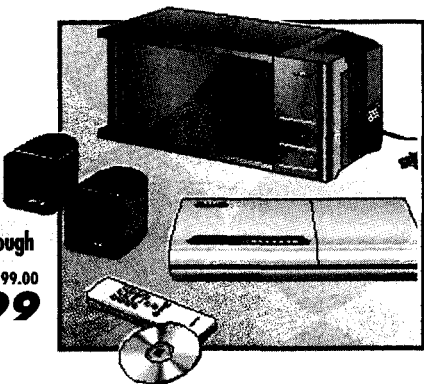


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WHY the red unicycle was left in the Seward, Alaska, dump and what inspired George Peck's wife, Carol, to bring it home are both unclear. "I'm a salvager and recycler," is all she will say. "She's a dump rat," Peck says. Carol put the unicycle in the garage, and Peck found it there. This was almost fourteen years ago. His life hasn't been the same since.

"I glom on to things," Peck says. "He gets obsessed," Carol says. Peck taught himself to ride the red unicycle—no books, no instructors. He practiced daily

for more than a month before he could wobble up and down his driveway. Then he attempted to take the unicycle onto the roads. Riding a unicycle is as precarious as it looks—the "cone of balance," as

by Michael Finkel

Peck calls it, is extraordinarily precise. A pebble can be enough to put you on your back. So can a patch of sand or a gust of wind or a crack in the pavement. This may be why the red cycle was tossed into the dump: Seward is possibly the worst spot on the planet in which to ride a unicycle. The place is all sand and gusts and cracks, not to

mention ice and snow and logs and boulders and mountains.

Peck learned to ride his unicycle under all conditions. He discovered how to make the cycle hop, and he honed the skill until he could pop over logs two feet in diameter. He figured out how to power through boulder fields, how to jump up and over picnic tables, how to turn in ankle-deep mud. He became skilled at riding in dried-out riverbeds, across frozen lakes, up mountain trails, and through wind-crusting snow. This is clearly not what unicycles were designed to do. When the red unicycle fell apart, Peck drove to Anchorage and bought a new one. When that broke, he ordered another. After a dozen more were destroyed, he began designing his own.

For almost a decade and a half, no matter the weather, Peck has gone mountain unicycling nearly every day—twice a day most weekends—in and around Seward. People in town are used to seeing him. He has ridden the shoreline so many times that he notices if a rock has been moved. Seward sits on Resurrection Bay, on the eastern edge of the Kenai Peninsula. It is separated from Anchorage by 125 miles of glaciated mountains and sprawling icefields. The town is so remote—a Galápagos island of sorts—that something odd or fantastic can develop there and never be discovered by anyone beyond the city limits.

Until three years ago, when he attended the International Unicycle Convention in Minneapolis, Peck was completely unknown in the unicycling community. At the meet he learned of a handful of other mountain unicyclists. He found out that his sport had not only other participants but also a name—"muni," short for "mountain unicycling" (a name, Peck feels, that is a little too cute; he prefers "rough-terrain cycling"). Later, through a unicycling newsletter, he read of plans for an inaugural muni convention. Last October he flew to Sacramento for the first annual California Mountain Unicycle Weekend. Thirty-five of the best rough-terrain unicyclists in North America came to show off their skills. No one was half as good as Peck. He is now widely viewed as the best mountain unicyclist in the world. He is credited with

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helping to invent the sport, and the cycles he has designed are probably the sturdiest and lightest unicycles ever built. He is riding rougher terrain every month. And he is almost certainly the world's oldest mountain unicyclist: Peck is fifty-six.

CAROL and George Peck and their two children, Kristopher, twelve, and Katy, seven, live in a small brown house two blocks from the center of town. Attracted to Alaska's frontier image, Peck moved to the state in 1974, after a stint in Nepal with the Peace Corps and almost ten years in the University of Idaho's graduate schools, where he earned degrees in physics, law, and teaching. He came to Seward to take the job of magistrate, a position he still holds. He met Carol Griswold in 1981.

The inside of their house, especially during the long Alaska winter, is a scene of unmitigated chaos. Peaches and Boomer, a pair of parakeets, like to dive-bomb visitors' heads. Berry and Jessie, two Labrador retrievers, wrestle in the kitchen. Katy prefers roller skates to sneakers, and Kristopher wouldn't be caught dead without his skateboard. The living room contains three unicycles, a small trampoline, a basketball net, an electric keyboard, two acoustic guitars, two fiddles (Carol and George play in a local folk band), an indoor garden, an eclectic library (one shelf devoted to entomology, another to dog training), a general scattering of children's toys, several of Carol's junkyard furniture discoveries, a hamster cage, a fish tank, and a midden of unicycle parts.

"George has been a teenager for forty years," Carol says. This is only partly true. When Peck is in his courtroom, facing the daily litany of drunk-driving and domestic-violence cases, he is fifty-six years old. When he is awake at two in the morning, mulling over the physics of wheel diameter and axle size, he is fifty-six. When he is riding, he is seventeen—though he doesn't use swear-words. When he falls, he says things like "Gargle!" and "Yug!" and "These shoes are explosively decoupling with the pedals, and that's disconcerting."

Peck is a little over six feet tall and about as thin as a fence post. He has the air of a mad scientist. His hair appears to be an assemblage of cowlicks. He is profoundly nearsighted, and wears

round gold-framed glasses. A housewide search for his car keys is almost a daily event. He eats dinner as if a cash prize were to be awarded to the first finisher. His unicycle is built of top-quality titanium and tempered aluminum parts, special-ordered from a custom manufacturer, but Peck often rides wearing faded jeans, a stained sweatshirt, and leather work boots. On the front of the family's washing machine, using word magnets, Katy has assembled a succinct ode to her father: DAD IS FUNNY.

On weekend days Peck takes his first ride soon after sunrise, usually with the dogs. He rides along Resurrection Bay, the sharp summits of the Chugach Mountains forming a backdrop. He pedals in fits and starts: a powerful flurry to ascend a flat-topped rock, an immediate ninety-degree turn on the top, a momentary pause to consider the drop-off, and a careful hop down to the sand. His arms provide counterbalance, waving in controlled, tai-chi-style movements. The tip of his tongue flits in and out. In rough-terrain cycling, top speed, even going downhill, is about six miles an hour. "It's not exhilarating," Peck says, "but a series of little joys." He cuts through a puddle, cracking a thin film of ice, and chugs up a dirty snowbank. He falls twice, gracefully, and climbs back on.

AUNICYCLE is both more and less than half a bicycle. It has a solid hub and lacks any gears, meaning that one rotation of the pedals produces one rotation of the wheel. This is called direct drive, and is the reason a unicycle is limited to low speeds. You can't coast, but you can ride backward.

"Unicycling is intrinsically a slow-motion event," Peck says. "It is more about rhythm and mental dexterity than about strength—it has more in common, I feel, with a chess match or a Bach concerto than with any extreme sport. And it's actually very safe—far safer than bicycling. I've never had an injury so bad I couldn't ride the next day. Much of the thrill, really, is in pondering the ergonomical conundrums. Torque. Pedal separation. Crank-arm length. Spokes. You need the cycle to be sturdy, and you need it to be light and maneuverable. And everything has to be balanced on one tiny axle. It's nearly insolvable. The five best riders I met at the California weekend were a

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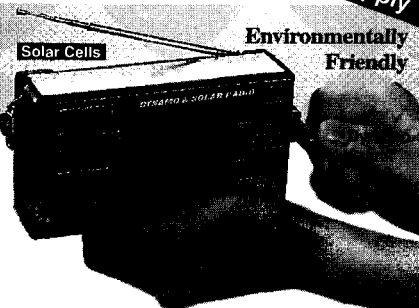
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physicist, a mathematician, a neurophysiologist, a computer analyst, and an Intel executive."

He says this as he rides. If a visitor jogs alongside him (the pace is perfect), Peck will furnish an hour-long disquisition. He will expound on Alaskan geology. He will talk about unicycling up street curbs, and about the appropriate pedal positions for optimum torque, and about the time he beat a pair of bicyclists up the steep Crown Point Mine trail. He will insist that it is possible to unicycle nearly any surface that can be walked, provided one has the right unicycle.

Peck estimates that he has spent \$2,000 on his current unicycle—but he is still unsatisfied. About once a week he visits Ron Henderlong, who helps to improve his unicycles. Henderlong Enterprises is a welding shop located in a garage not far from Peck's house. Henderlong is shorter than Peck but probably twice his weight. The lower half of Henderlong's face is devoted to a terrific beard and moustache, between which is inserted a steady stream of Marlboros. He wears a patch over his right eye. On the floor of his garage is a masking-tape outline of a body, with a wrenchlike shape stenciled in the body's right hand. "That's the last guy who went into my toolbox without asking," he says. According to Peck, Henderlong is a genius with hot-rod engines and cutting-edge unicycles. He customized Peck's shock-absorbing seat post. The two men can talk shop for hours; Peck always leaves with a new idea or two. "I'm tired of giving him six-packs of beer," Peck says, "but he won't take any money."

If you really want to make Peck mad, ask him if he is a clown. "That word makes my teeth set right at the top," he says. The image of unicycling, Peck fears, automatically brings clowns to mind. He has been asked more than once if he works for a circus. Some have wondered if he entertains at birthday parties. One person questioned whether riding a unicycle is an appropriate activity for a judge. "Unicycling is at the very bottom of the respectability curve," Peck says. "Nobody would accuse me of being irresponsible if I were a skier or a

rollerblader. I'm trying to get as far away from clowns as I possibly can." He tries not to use the term "unicycle" anymore: too circusy. He prefers to call what he rides a cycle.

SOMETIMES Peck thinks that if he can only free his sport from the clown associations, nothing will stop rough-terrain cycling from becoming the next big thing. He likes to point out that unicycling has been around longer than bicycling: one of the original cycles, the "penny-farthing" with the giant front rim, was little more than a unicycle with a training wheel. Combine modern materials with the old idea, toss in a few log jumps, and rough-terrain cycling should be Olympics-bound: "Bored teenagers in California will be hopping their cycles over their Volkswagens."

Then he thinks better of it. "Cycling is safe and slow," he says, "and safe and slow are unhip. People want sports that are like video games. Maybe that's why there are so few riders." Peck estimates that there are perhaps 200 muni participants worldwide, including a club based in England and a Frenchman, Thierry Bouche, who has unicycled down a 20,000-foot peak in South America. No company in the United States sells mountain unicycles (with so few riders, there's no incentive to manufacture them), and without good cycles available there won't be many more converts.

The sport is nearly certain to stay tiny. And in Seward, at least, it is likely to remain a solitary pursuit. Peck hasn't let this discourage him. Recently his cycling entered an entirely new phase. He acquired a contraption called an ultimate wheel, which is a unicycle without a seat—just a wheel and two pedals. It looks impossible to ride, even when

Peck is riding it. It took a month of intense ultimate-wheel training, combined with the skills of years of unicycling, for him to balance on the thing. He says he's glommed on to it. Carol says it's a new level of obsession. He and Henderlong are sure to re-equip it with sturdier parts. And Peck is already riding it up and down Alaska's mountains. ☼



KRISTOPHER PECK

A Man From Mars

Fifty years ago John Gunther, a brilliant foreign correspondent, published a famous book about "the greatest, craziest, most dangerous . . . most powerful and magnificent nation ever known"

by Arthur Schlesinger Jr.

"AMERICA," Winston Churchill said, "stands at this moment at the summit of the world." The moment was August, 1945. Nazi Germany had fallen, the atomic bomb had been dropped, imperial Japan was about to surrender, the European Allies were battered and spent, and the United States bestrode the narrow world. It was a new America, hardly known to the world—or to itself. This was the America that John Gunther portrayed in the vivid and acute reportage of *Inside U.S.A.*, which is to be reissued this month by the New Press.

This book, now half a century old, is an astonishing *tour de force*. It presents a shrewd, fast-moving, sparkling panorama of the United States at this historic moment of apparent triumph. Sinclair Lewis called it "the richest treasure-house of facts about America that has ever been published, and probably the most spirited and interesting." At the same time, in its preoccupations and insights *Inside U.S.A.* foresaw dilemmas and paradoxes that were to harass and frustrate Americans for the rest of the century. And in this age of collective journalism one is permitted to marvel that *Inside U.S.A.* is a one-man production.

John Gunther was forty-three years old in November of 1944, when he set out on his exploration of America. He was already the best known of the brilliant generation of foreign correspondents that had educated an isolationist America about the outside world in the years between the two great wars. Their names are mostly forgotten now—Vincent Sheean, Raymond Gram Swing, Dorothy Thompson, Edgar Snow, Harold Isaacs, Paul Scott Mowrer, Edgar



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Ansel Mowrer, H. R. Knickerbocker, and many others. They were a venturesome crowd, audacious, irreverent, resourceful, hard-playing, hard-drinking, and hardworking, and their ardent dispatches brought home to Americans the personalities, ambitions, intrigues, and dangers that were putting the planet on the slippery slope into the Second World War.

Many, like Gunther himself, came

from the isolationist heartland, the Middle West. Gunther was born in Chicago in 1901, graduated from the University of Chicago in 1922, and later that year made his first trip to Europe, in the style of the times, on a cattle boat. After a stint back home as a reporter for the *Chicago Daily News*, he returned to Europe in 1924 and soon, as a *Daily News* roving correspondent, was covering sto-

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ries in a dozen European countries. By 1930 he was the head of the *Daily News* bureau in Vienna. In 1935 he was transferred to the paper's top job in Europe—bureau chief in London.

He was a big man, six feet two, blond, handsome, spirited, generous, gregarious, upwardly mobile, with expensive tastes, boundless charm, boundless curiosity, and boundless energy. Rebecca West, whom he interviewed in Chicago in 1923, described him as a "Gothic angel . . . with the vitality of seven carthorses." (Meeting again in London in 1924, they became lovers.) He was a man's man too, well liked by fellow reporters.

The 1930s, Gunther later recalled,

were the bubbling, blazing days of American foreign correspondence in Europe. . . . Most of us traveled steadily, met constantly, exchanged information, caroused, took in each other's washing, and, even when most fiercely competitive, were devoted friends. . . . We were scavengers, buzzards, out to get the news, no matter whose wings got clipped.

But Gunther was not a conventional correspondent. He had little interest in spot news or in scoops; he thought it silly to break his neck trying to beat the competition by a few minutes on a story that everyone would have in an hour. His early hope had been to succeed as a novelist. His novels made little impression. Rebecca West told him that his fiction was awful. But his journalism, with characters supplied by life itself, was the work of a novelist manqué. "I had little basic interest in politics . . .," he said, "but I was ravenously interested in human beings. . . . For good or ill, I instinctively think of myself as a novelist." And his preferred form was not the dispatch but the book.

In 1934 Cass Canfield, of the house of Harper's, persuaded him to try his hand at a country-by-country survey of Europe. Carrying on his newspaper job during the day and working nights, weekends, and holidays on the book, Gunther somehow turned out *Inside Europe* in seven months. The book, published in February of 1936, was extremely readable, packed with high-level gossip and striking personality sketches, packed also with solid facts presented in a lively manner. It was an instant success, enabling Gunther to retire from daily jour-

nalism. As a freelance writer, he began to apply the Inside formula to other parts of the world. *Inside Asia* came out in 1939, *Inside Latin America* in 1941.

After Pearl Harbor he served briefly as a war correspondent in Europe. But since 1936 he had been thinking about an Inside book on his native land. *Inside Europe* had been something of a helter-skelter job of improvisation and assembly; each new Inside book was preceded by ever-more-systematic preparation. For the book on the United States, Gunther prepared as never before.

He began by drafting an elaborate outline and requesting comments from a hundred or so journalists, academics, scientists, and lawyers across the country. Then he asked members of Congress; business, labor, and farm leaders; and heads of national organizations to suggest key people to whom he should talk in the (then) forty-eight states. He submitted questions to forty-eight governors—and received forty-seven replies. He read the classic works on America (Alexis de Tocqueville, James, later Lord, Bryce) and the writings of the living Briton who knew the most about America—D. W. Brogan.

Having done his homework, he began in November of 1944 his "long circumnavigation of the greatest, craziest, most dangerous, least stable, most spectacular, least grown-up, and most powerful and magnificent nation ever known." For thirteen months he traversed all forty-eight states, visiting more than 300 communities, including all but five of the forty-three cities with a population above 200,000.

INSIDE U.S.A. does not pretend to be a profound analysis of American civilization, in the manner of Tocqueville and Bryce. But Gunther had his own quiver of penetrating questions. His objective was to identify the forces that made "this incomparable Golconda of a country" move. Wherever he went, he asked, Who runs this state or city? What are the basic and irreversible sources of power—social power, economic power, political power? He interviewed more than 900 people and emerged with more than a million words of notes. And he did it all himself, without professional researchers or stringers.

It took Gunther fifteen months and half a million words to complete the

book, which he called "the hardest task I ever undertook." It was all the harder because in the spring of 1946 his beloved sixteen-year-old son fell ill with a malignant brain tumor. Young Johnny lingered in pain for more than a year, while his father, between constant visits to the hospital, worked desperately away on the book. The last batch of copy went to the printers on March 11, 1947; the index (5,197 entries) was completed on April 11; books were shipped on May 6 and in the bookstores (for \$5.00) by the publication date of May 28. The book sold half a million copies in the first three months. "I could pay my debts," Gunther recalled, "which were considerable."

Big sales and enthusiastic reviews were small consolation; Johnny died at the end of June. His grieving father turned to a memoir of his son, a restrained and moving work intended for family and friends. In 1949, assured that it might comfort other parents, he consented to its publication. *Death Be Not Proud* remains Gunther's most enduring book.

Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands of Americans, and soon thousands of Europeans, read *Inside U.S.A.* and discovered the new America. The only virtue he brought to the job, Gunther claimed, aside from curiosity, was ignorance. "Not only was I writing for the man from Mars; I was one." The book has the excitement that an ace foreign correspondent brings to a strange land. Gunther was never sated: he had the happy gift of being able to roll on and on without letting the sights blur his eyes or the sounds deafen his ears. Reviewing the book fifty years ago in *The Atlantic*, I found the writing lucid, informal, and relaxed. I was especially struck by his talent for sharp and sensitive observation, his relish for people and portraiture, his knack for compressing intricate analyses into brief paragraphs—all these make for intense readability. The book captures the national mood at the end of the Second World War—the hopes, the doubts, the selfishness and the generosity, the ugliness and the grandeur—not as in a still photograph but as in a wonderfully varied moving picture.

There are brilliant set pieces: a day in the life of Fiorello La Guardia, the mayor of New York City, for example, and a delightful account of Colonel McCormick and the *Chicago Tribune*. There are de-

lectable phrases: Los Angeles as "Iowa with palms," and Senator John W. Bricker, of Ohio, the Republican vice-presidential candidate in 1944, as "intellectually . . . like interstellar space—a vast vacuum occasionally crossed by homeless, wandering clichés." Gunther had good things to say about Wayne Morse, of Oregon; Wilson Wyatt, of Louisville; Walter Reuther, of Detroit; Leverett Saltonstall, of Massachusetts; Harold Stassen, of Minnesota; Ellis Arnall, of Georgia. He came to feel, however, that he had not done justice to Earl Warren, of California—"the most serious misjudgment of a personality I have ever made."

It is to be noted that Gunther in 1947 spotted John F. Kennedy as an "attractive youngster," Lyndon B. Johnson as an "able" young congressman, and Hubert Humphrey as "one of the best mayors in the nation." Richard M. Nixon, first elected to Congress in 1946, did not make the California chapters.

His flip judgments often raised hackles. Indianapolis did not relish being described as the dirtiest city in the nation, though its citizens did start thereafter to clean the city up; nor did Knoxville, Tennessee, enjoy its ranking as the ugliest city. Publication produced a pleasurable amount of local protest and outcry.

Gunther was impressed by the "extraordinary tenacity of state characteristics," the deep-rooted instinct of a state to grow its own way—and so are we, when we read his still accurate chapters on, say, California ("at once demented and very sane, adolescent and mature") and Texas ("spacious, militant, hospitable, beaming with self-satisfaction"). For all the recurrent concern about standardization and conformity, Gunther was right in emphasizing the regional variations and peculiarities, the intractable pluralism, that defied homogenization and continue to do so to this day.

Inside U.S.A. is far from a panegyric. Gunther listed "the worst American characteristics—covetousness, ignorance, absence of esthetic values, get-rich-quickism, bluster, lack of vision, lack of foresight, excessive standardization, and immature and undisciplined social behavior." America was still "an enormously provincial nation," he wrote. "I do not know any country that is so ignorant about itself." Have we improved noticeably in the half century since?



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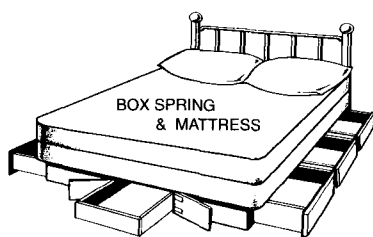
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GUNTHER had no doubt about the supreme domestic challenge. "The most gravid, cancerous, and pressing of all American problems," he wrote, "is that of the Negro, insoluble under present political and social conditions though capable of great amelioration." He was appalled by the treatment of black Americans in the white South. Until he reached the South, he had, as he confessed, no real idea of what life was like for his black fellow citizens. "I knew that 'segregation' was a problem; I had no conception at all of the grim enormity of the problem." He could not believe it when he was forbidden to take eminent black educators into restaurants in Atlanta, supposedly one of the more civilized southern cities. Atlanta "out-ghettoes anything I ever saw in a European ghetto, even in Warsaw," he wrote. "What I looked at was caste and untouchability—half the time I blinked remembering that this was not India."

His catalogue of recent lynchings breathes with anger. He noted that almost every victim of lynching since the war was a veteran. The war, he argued, had been fought abroad for democratic principles still violated at home. One result was a rebellious black community, "probably more unified today, more politically vehement, more aggressive in its demand for full citizenship—even in the South—than at any other time in history." He detected slow but steady improvement: black Americans were at last let into the American Bar Association and the American College of Surgeons; Jackie Robinson had even penetrated organized baseball.

One thing he deemed certain: the days of treating black Americans like sheep were done with. The hope, he felt, lay in incipient black militancy, in latent white decency, and, above all, in education. "The United States must either terminate education among Negroes, an impossibility, or prepare to accept the eventual consequences, that is, Negro equality under democracy." Not a bad guess; in the half century since, there have been black justices on the Supreme Court, a black chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, a black governor of Virginia, black mayors across the country, even in Atlanta. Still, white America has far to go in admitting its black fellow citizens to full equality.

Another concern high on Gunther's list was the protection of the environment. The issue in 1945 was phrased in terms of the conservation of natural resources. Gunther observed that the guardian of the balance of nature was the national government, and the enemies were the greedy locals—cattlemen, timber men, sheep men, mine owners—who hoped to make a fast buck by overgrazing and mining the lands and slashing through the forests. Read his story of FDR's rescue of Jackson Hole from the Wyoming cattle interests.

America, Gunther observed, is "a nation on wheels." Americans are always on the move. Nomadism, he thought, breeds indifference to local civic problems: hence municipal corruption, defective public services, slums, juvenile delinquency, the repellent sprawl of filling stations and diners. Yet, at the same time, nomadism is one of the centripetal forces, like chain stores and comic strips, that binds the United States together. The melting pot, he suggested, is another such force. Gunther's view that on the whole the melting pot works will distress multicultural ideologues half a century later, but it is far from clear that Gunther was wrong.

His interest in what holds a nation together is especially relevant in the 1990s, when the end of the Cold War has released ethnic, religious, and linguistic antagonisms that tear nations apart. As for the United States, the fact that it is "in final distillation and essence still run by the propertied class" is, he thought, "the biggest single factor making for national unity." But the fact that "this class has failed in many of its duties, responsibilities, and obligations is the greatest single impediment to unity and the chief force making for discontent." Those who most fear revolution, he wrote, are at the same time those who most bitterly oppose government action designed to fend off disaster.

The American future, he proposed, depends on the way the nation answers three principal questions: how to maintain a democratic polity if the economic machine should break down again, as it did so disastrously in the 1930s; how to reconcile the increasing power of corporate interests and their lobbies with the public interest and the general welfare; and how to avoid a reversion to isola-

tionism and use American power to promote international organization and the cause of peace.

Fifty years later the first question has not bothered us much; the automatic stabilizers built into the economy by the New Deal have thus far prevented a major depression. But the next two questions afflict us still, and perhaps more than ever.

Midway in his quest Gunther discovered that he was accumulating too much material for a single volume. He decided to write first a state-by-state book on the *Inside Europe* pattern, surveying the local politicos, the industries, the crops, the natural settings, the prejudices, dialects, jokes, and folklore, the food and drink. A second volume, *Inside Washington*, would deal with national problems, figures, and institutions. The general questions raised in *Inside U.S.A.*, along with discussion on a national scale of big business, labor, agriculture, journalism, women, religion, and education, were thus deferred for more-systematic consideration in the sequel.

Alas, Gunther never got around to

writing the second volume. He explained later that he dreaded the amount of work involved, and that he could not figure out how to synchronize the publication of the book with the presidential-election schedule. Instead he brought out a revised edition of *Inside U.S.A.* in 1951—"less exuberant, less sanguine, than the original," he said in 1962.

In 1948 he had married Jane Perry, a beautiful and intelligent young woman who became the indispensable partner in his new projects. *Inside Africa* came out in 1955, *Inside Russia Today* in 1958, *Inside Europe Today* in 1961, *Inside South America* in 1967, *Inside Australia*, a posthumous work completed by William H. Forbis, in 1972. He also wrote books on Franklin D. Roosevelt, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and Douglas MacArthur, a couple of novels (no more successful than his earlier efforts), and several children's books.

He wrote so much partly because he loved writing and partly because he also loved living well. He was a generous host, a great party giver, a natty dresser, a frequenter of deluxe restaurants and

nightclubs. He habitually spent all the money he earned. But even when he had money, he had no desire to stop writing. It is interesting to note that Gunther remained a top reporter for forty years, while many of his flashy contemporaries in that great generation of foreign correspondents faded away after the war. The reason is simple: Gunther worked harder than anyone else. His curiosity was unlimited; his ear and eye for significant and revealing detail were preternaturally sharp; and his capacity for making the most unpromising material vivid and readable was extraordinary. His reactions and judgments were often exceedingly astute. He was (and deserved to be), in the words of Eric Sevareid, "in his day probably the most famous American newsmen of them all."

In addition, John Gunther was a man of the utmost personal kindness, especially to young writers (as I had good reason to know). He was wonderful company and a marvelous friend. And he remained throughout a genuinely modest man. "I'm terribly limited," he told a *Time* interviewer in 1958. "I completely lack inten-

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sity of soul. I'm not original. I'm really only a competent observer who works terribly hard at doing a job well." He was not kidding, but he was wrong. He had a real talent for bringing facts to life, and fifty years later *Inside U.S.A.* still vibrates with his energy and vitality, still draws on the past and present in ways that continue to illuminate the future.

John Gunther died in New York City of liver cancer on May 29, 1970, at the age of sixty-eight. ☾

The Next Liberalism

by Theda Skocpol

IT TAKES A NATION: A New Agenda for Fighting Poverty

by Rebecca M. Blank.
Princeton University Press,
400 pages, \$29.95.

AFTER Bill Clinton was elected President for the first time, a joke about welfare reform circulated among policy cognoscenti: The new President sits at his desk in the Oval Office with two buttons in front of him. One button is labeled LAUNCH NUCLEAR WEAPONS—and we all know he will never press it. The other reads END WELFARE AS WE KNOW IT, echoing the popular line from Clinton's nomination-acceptance speech at the 1992 Democratic National Convention. Five years later the joke no longer seems funny.

Just as the brave new world of welfare reform descends upon the dependent poor, Rebecca Blank, a labor economist at Northwestern University, publishes *It Takes a Nation: A New Agenda for Fighting Poverty*—a book whose forward-looking subtitle belies its touchingly nostalgic message. Blank originally hoped to influence last year's welfare debate, and many of her policy prescriptions might have made sense as modifications of Aid to Families with Dependent Children, now abolished by Congress with Clin-

ton's assent. The Republican insurgency of 1994 radically transformed the welfare-reform debate. "Listening to the public statements about the poor, and about the nature and history of U.S. antipoverty efforts, I became increasingly angry," Blank writes in her preface. Her book in progress took on a new purpose: to bring cool social-science expertise to a politically overheated debate. Ponderous, encyclopedic, unremittingly rational, *It Takes a Nation* provides an extended tutorial in poverty research. Recent social trends and most antipoverty programs are exhaustively dissected. Questions are answered and myths dispelled.

Aren't America's poor mostly black people living in urban ghetto neighborhoods? Actually, no, Blank tells us.

In reality, the poor are much more like "us" than like "them." The majority of poor live in mixed-income neighborhoods. . . . Very few are continuously on welfare for long periods of time. . . . [A] great majority express hopes that are very similar to the hopes of all Americans.

Won't poverty abate once cash assistance for stay-at-home mothers is limited and all poor adults are forced to get jobs? Probably not, Blank says. Poor women are already working more now than they were twenty years ago. Economic growth has generated more and more jobs, but the "primary change in the lives of the poor over the past 20 years has been the deteriorating set of economic opportunities available to less-skilled workers." Wages and job-related benefits have lost ground, especially for less-skilled men, who have in turn become less capable and less attractive fathers and husbands. National economic growth is no longer a tide that lifts all boats, and "employment has become progressively less effective at reducing poverty."

Haven't federal programs targeting the poor made things worse—in part by crowding out religious and private charitable efforts that could more effectively help the poor without undermining their morale? Blank amasses evidence that federal antipoverty programs—especially food stamps and Medicaid—have made things significantly better than they otherwise would have been. Blank's reading of the data also absolves AFDC of most responsibility for causing increases

in out-of-wedlock childbearing. This phenomenon has occurred even as welfare benefits have lost value, and among the nonpoor as well as the poor.

Federal, state, and private antipoverty efforts complement one another, Blank shows. She makes a striking point about what it would take to replace the \$77 billion a year the federal government spends on AFDC, food stamps, and cash assistance to the elderly poor. To replace the federal contribution

through the religious community requires that every one of the 258,000 religious congregations (Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, or otherwise) that exist in this country would have to raise an additional \$300,000 per year in all future years. . . . and spend all of the increase on services for the poor. Alternatively, if this giving is done through private charitable organizations that serve the poor, it would require those groups to raise over *seven times* more in private donations than they currently receive.

Blank's able analysis reveals that conservative schemes to privatize welfare cannot work—and would probably amount to little more than further tax giveaways to the rich.

ANYONE who believes *It Takes a Nation* will come away thinking that the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, ending "welfare as we know it," was fundamentally misconceived. Blank tells what she would have done instead, outlining reforms that resemble the welfare changes President Clinton sponsored back in 1993. She favors three tiers of federal-state programs. The first tier would offer short-term help (such as car repairs or rental assistance) to those folks who need just a bit of aid to find or hold jobs. The second tier would provide job training and ongoing support for low-wage workers. The third tier would consist of intensive, behaviorally tailored service programs offering closely supervised assistance to adults who have trouble holding jobs and raising children on their own.

Alas, Blank's three-tiered welfare-reform scheme is pure pie in the sky at this point. Although she tries to retool her proposals as recommendations for state-level officials, her calls for greater spend-

ing on the poor, more-intensive social services, and open-ended assistance are completely out of sync with fiscal and political realities.

Here is the glaring weakness of *It Takes a Nation*: a failure of political analysis and imagination. From this book it is hard to tell why welfare became such a hot potato after the 1960s. Blank presents AFDC as suffering from weaknesses of "policy design" that could have been corrected if only Americans had avoided political "rhetoric" and paid adequate attention to sound policy research. We learn little about who was purveying the rhetoric, and why it resonated so broadly. Because Blank fails to analyze what went wrong politically for welfare in the past, she cannot project feasible strategies for the future.

AFDIC was descended from "mothers' pensions," state laws enacted early in the century at the urging of organized American women who wanted to honor and support stay-at-home motherhood, even among the poor. Quaint as their thinking now seems, the original supporters of welfare argued that the work of mothering was like soldiering, because mothers risked their lives in childbirth and served the nation by raising good citizens. Under the 1935 Social Security Act the federal government turned mothers' pensions into nationally subsidized Aid to Dependent Children (later relabeled Aid to Families with Dependent Children). Like mothers' pensions, ADC/AFDC originally helped mostly white widowed mothers.

The bitter politicization of welfare after the mid-1960s is the crucial backdrop to what finally happened in the summer of 1996. AFDC's clientele changed to some extent when African-Americans migrated to cities following the Second World War, and after judicial rulings made it easier for poor blacks and divorced or never-married mothers to claim public aid. Following the War on Poverty and the political upheavals of the 1960s, conservatives were able to play on popular resentment of expanded welfare programs. As many Americans faced tougher economic circumstances, and as more and more women entered the wage-labor force, welfare programs that narrowly targeted some very poor mothers (stereotyped as mostly black) could easily be portrayed



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as unfair. Republicans exploited this theme for all it was worth, and many Americans responded. It hardly mattered that all along most welfare mothers have had to work part-time off the books to survive—a fact well documented in an important new book, *Making Ends Meet*, by Kathryn Edin and Laura Lein. The point is both cultural and political: a welfare program originally conceived as “mothers’ pensions” lost its legitimacy in an era of racial conflict, declining wages, and widespread female entry into the wage-labor market.

Even as welfare became a political football, the United States developed another, much more successful antipov-erty program: Social Security. Of course, Americans do not think of Social Security as a poverty program (and Blank doesn’t treat it as one either). Americans applaud Social Security for its nearly universal coverage and its lack of stigmatizing means tests. They understand Social Security benefits as a socially legitimate return for a lifetime of contributions through work and payroll taxes. Regardless of how Social Security is thought of, since the 1970s it has in fact pulled many more Americans above the poverty line than all other social programs combined. Social Security has also remained popular with ordinary citizens, even amid federal budgetary cutbacks and resistance to other kinds of taxation.

As *It Takes a Nation* skillfully documents, many American workers today are finding it difficult to earn wages and benefits adequate to sustain a family. This problem transcends race and includes both single- and dual-parent families. So why not take the opportunity that the demise of AFDC now thrusts upon us? Why not start talking about broad new ways—a widening of the idea of social security—to help the majority of American working parents, with extra help for the poorest offered in the context of such an overall effort? This approach may not seem realistic for 1997 and 1998, but it could gain popularity and plausibility over five to ten years—about the same amount of time that it took conservative Republicans to capture Congress from the Democrats and bring their crusade against AFDC to fruition.

Blank dismisses broad social programs as politically unfeasible, even though her own elaborate prescriptions

are equally so. Over the past several decades liberal antipov-erty warriors have suffered from a crimped sense of political realism. While constantly retailoring narrow policy prescriptions to the perceived mood of the moment in Washington, D.C., they plug away at amassing facts, doing complex statistical analyses, and writing books and articles that avoid political stances and “rhetorical” appeals to popular sentiment. By now we know that this approach doesn’t work. But here is Rebecca Blank, trying it one more time. Although she deftly synthesizes decades of academic research, her book will, predictably, never achieve even a fraction of the political influence attained by Charles Murray’s factually sloppy 1984 manifesto, *Losing Ground*, which became the veritable bible of the Rea-

ganite assault on welfare. In politics, Murray and his fellow conservatives know, the use of emotional images and moral appeals to a majority matter much more than accurate statistical tables.

Blank and other poverty researchers are having a hard time weaning themselves from the old welfare programs. They still want to go back and tinker with the Personal Responsibility Act of 1996. But the American people will not accept elaborate benefits or services restricted to some very poor parents in an era when so many working families are struggling with low wages, dwindling or absent health benefits, and inadequate child-care arrangements. Compassionate policies toward the poor await the wider solidarity of a new politics of social and economic security—the ground of the next liberalism. ☛

BRIEF REVIEWS



Lincoln's Admiral: The Civil War Campaigns of David Farragut

by James P. Duffy.
Wiley, 288 pages, \$27.95.

David Farragut, the U.S. Navy’s first admiral, did not roar, “Damn the torpedoes. Full speed ahead,” as his ships entered Mobile Bay. He said the equivalent, however, and Mobile was taken, like New Orleans and the Mississippi River before it. Mr. Duffy’s book on Farragut’s Civil War campaigns reveals that he was a serious, determined, vastly capable commander, and too unflappable to provide picturesque anecdotes. His background was unusual. His father, a sea captain from Minorca, served in the American Revolution, and that connection eventually led to the placement of the motherless son in the family of a naval officer who offered to train him for the sea. The boy was less than ten years old when he was commissioned a midshipman. He sailed off, under the

eye of his surrogate father, into the War of 1812. Most of the action he encountered was off the Pacific coast of South America, where at one point he was appointed prize master of a captured vessel. At twelve years old he was commander of a ship and handled it well—after getting the disgruntled civilian captain out of his way. That high point was followed by years of peace and stagnation, until the Civil War required efficient action against Confederate ports and the Mississippi River, and Lincoln’s Secretary of the Navy put Farragut on the job. The campaign up the river was full of risk and excitement and tricky maneuvers, and the author makes the most of it. Mr. Duffy is primarily interested in fighting ships. He makes their equipment and performance and the reasons for Farragut’s decisions thoroughly absorbing and understandable. He does not altogether overlook the people who worked those ships. After one battle Farragut looked at the casualties laid out on the deck and quietly wept.

PHOTOGRAPH BY BRUNO DEBAS

In the Memory of the Forest

by Charles T. Powers.
Scribner, 384 pages,
\$23.00.

Mr. Powers's novel starts in the shape of an amateur-detective thriller. The setting is a small farming village in Poland shortly after the collapse of Communist rule, where Leszek, an amiable young man, wants to know how the son of a good old friend and neighbor came to be murdered in the nearby forest. The police and civic authorities, hangovers from the old regime, are doing nothing about the killing except talk—and Mr. Powers does a splendid imitation of soothing official gobbledygook. Leszek and the victim's enraged father begin their own investigation, and the novel becomes an exploration of the guilt, fear, and corruption that underlie the history of the town, where nothing is ever said about the disappearance of the once large Jewish population or the network of bribery and smuggling that supplanted normal business under the Communists. The novel is a serious work on the aftermath of fifty years of horror and the reactions of the people asked to confront the past that they have tried to ignore. It is also a good story, rich in action and character, with an intelligent acceptance of the fact that an indecent government can drive decent people to indecent action.

The Letters of Nancy Mitford and Evelyn Waugh

edited by Charlotte Mosley.
Houghton Mifflin, 531 pages,
\$40.00.

Mitford's niece by marriage, Charlotte Mosley, explains that she has omitted Evelyn's earliest letter to Nancy, "because it would necessitate thirteen footnotes in as many lines of text to explain people who do not reappear." She also warns readers, "Their letters were written to amuse, distract or tease and should be read for entertainment, *not* as the unvarnished truth." With those points in mind, a reader who enjoys malicious gossip and extravagant prejudices can get much pleasure from the Mitford-Waugh letters. Reading them is rather like panning for gold. In the midst of

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Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") Can Israel survive without it?

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What are the facts?

The Root of the conflict. The conflict between Israel and the Arabs is not about borders and not about the Palestinians. It is about Israel's very existence. The PLO still adheres to its infamous "phased plan." It calls for first creating a Palestinian state on any territory vacated by Israel and then using that state to foment a final allied Arab assault against the truncated Jewish state.

The Importance of territory. Many believe that in this age of missiles, territory is of little importance. But this is not the case. The Arab states have acquired over \$50 billion of the most advanced armaments since the end of the Gulf War. And those are not just "conventional" weapons—enormous quantities of tanks, aircraft and much more. The Arab state possess large arsenals of chemical and biological weapons, and all of them work feverishly on the development of their nuclear potential. All of those weapons have only one single target and one single purpose: the destruction of the state of Israel. And that goal is not being cancelled for any agreements between Israel and the Palestinians.

For both "conventional" war and for war of mass destruction, territory and topography are critical for self-defense and deterrence. The mountainous territory of Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") is an indispensable line of defense. It totally controls access to Israel's

heartland from the east. Israel needs this high ground for defense and to be able to peer deeply into enemy territory. The high ground allows Israel to detect missiles while they are still in the launch stage and to destroy them.

Would the "West Bank" be demilitarized? Even those who want Israel to retreat to her pre-1967 borders are agreed that the evacuated areas must be demilitarized. But that would be useless. Because the Palestinians will have thousands of trained soldiers, camouflaged as their police force. In case of war against Israel, these troops could be helicoptered in minutes to their positions, with armored

forces reaching them within the same night. In any case, it is highly doubtful that the surrounding hostile Arab nations would allow such a military vacuum

"Without Judea/Samaria (the 'West Bank') Israel would be totally indefensible; therefore, neither the purposes of Israel nor those of the United States are served by Israel's relinquishing control of the 'West Bank'."

to exist. And finally, there is the matter of terrorism. There are over fifteen Palestinian terror organizations that neither Yassir Arafat nor any other Palestinian authority can control. There would be a constant rain of Katyusha rockets launched into the Tel Aviv area and into the entire coastal plain, which contains 80% of Israel's population and of its industrial and military potential. Ben Gurion airport, every incoming and outgoing flight, would be subject to mortar fire or shoulder-held Stinger attack. Does anybody doubt that the Arabs would not exploit that irresistible opportunity?

Without the "West Bank" Israel would be totally indefensible. That is the professional opinion of over 100 U.S. generals and admirals. Israel's strong defensive posture makes it most inadvisable for Israel's enemies to attack her. But once this defensive strength is removed, a coordinated war against Israel can only be a matter of time. The example and fate of Czechoslovakia, which preparatory to the Second World War was dismantled and shorn of its defensive capacity, insistently come to mind. What does all this mean to the United States? In a part of the world in which our country has the most far-reaching geopolitical stakes, Israel is the guarantor of American interests in the area. With Israel in a position of weakness, the role of the United States in the area would collapse and radical states such as Syria, Iraq and Iran would dominate. That is why, despite the heady prospect of "peace in our time," neither the purposes of Israel nor those of the United States would be served by Israel's relinquishing control over the "West Bank."

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ANSWERS TO THE MARCH PUZZLER

P	R	O	T	E	G	E	B	E	R	E	T	S
L	A	N	D	E	R	B	E	G	O	N	I	A
I	B	I	F	L	O	E	L	B	O	S	O	X
E	B	O	N	S	C	A	T	A	M	U	T	O
S	I	N	U	S	E	N	S	C	R	E	E	N
S	T	P	A	T	R	I	C	K	S	D	A	Y
P	R	E	T	O	R	G	H	S	T	A	M	P
L	Y	P	G	N	E	Y	E	D	O	S	S	A
A	P	P	L	E	S	M	E	A	N	S	T	R
S	L	E	E	V	E	S	S	T	R	E	E	T
H	O	R	N	E	T	R	E	E	N	T	R	Y

Dress Code

In the spirit of Saint Patrick's Day, the 18 asterisked answers are dressed in green in the diagram. Across. 1. PROTEGE (anag.) *6. BE(R)ETS *10. (S)LANDER 11. BEGON(e) + I + A 12. FLOE (homophone) 13. BO(SO)X 14. E(B)ON 15. SCAT (double def.) 17. ST + NUS (rev.) 19. S(CREE)N 23. PRETOR (anag.) *26. S(TAM)P *30. EYED (homophone) 32. OSSA (double def.) *33. AP(PL)E 34. MEAN (double def.) *35. SLE(EVE)S (less anag.) *36. ST(RE)ET *37. HORN + ET 38. RE(EN)TRY (Terry anag.) Down. 1. PLIES (double def.) 2. RABBI + TRY *3. ON(I) + ON 4. (T)EELS *5. GRO + CER (rev.) *6. BELTS (double def.) *7. ROOM (rev.) 8. EN(SUE)D 9. S(AX)ONY *11. BE + AN *13. BA(d) + CKS 16. TEAMSTER (hidden) *18. S + TONE 20. S(PL)ASH *21. PE(P)PER *22. CH(EES)E (see rev.) 24. RESET (anag.) 25. G(a)Y + MS 27. (b)ASSET *28. P + ARTY 29. G(L)EN 31. DATE (double def.)

much water and gravel one finds sparkling phrases, glittering anecdotes, and now and then a nugget, such as Waugh's observation apropos Jessica Mitford's book on California funeral customs that the features "that strike us as gruesome can be traced to papal, royal & noble rites of the last five centuries." There is also an argument about how Mitford, in a piece on French affairs, had described the activities of a Catholic clergyman. Waugh, a niggling pedant on official procedure, was determined to set her straight. Mitford defended her sources. The reader gradually realizes that neither of them knew exactly what had gone on and therefore both were soaring in Cloud-Cuckoo-Land. Since they shared a detestation of the twentieth century, they were really more comfortable up there. Ms. Mosley's notes on the letters are terse and practical. One learns who the people mentioned were, whom they married (usually several spouses), and when they died. Occasionally one learns a bit more. Osbert Sitwell wrote Waugh a congratulatory letter about *Brideshead Revisited* but privately told friends that he found the novel "unspeakably vulgar." It is not safe to skip anything in this peculiar correspondence, but not advisable to read it straight through. The letters require the free time they originally had to create the effect that the writers intended.

The Inheritance

by Louisa May Alcott.

Dutton. 188 pages, \$18.00.

The editors, Joel Myerson and Daniel Shealy, found among the Alcott papers a notebook labeled "My first novel written at seventeen" in Louisa's hand. Alcott devotees will want to read it. Nobody else needs to, although any reader can be impressed by the young author's control of her plot and her implied knowledge of the popular fiction of 1849. Titles and money abound, as do tears and blushes. Noble renunciation marches with improbable repentance. There is no hint of the humor that enlivened Alcott's later writing. There is no evidence that the tale was ever published, which may have been just as well. It would have been a hard thing for the mature Alcott to live down.

—Phoebe-Lou Adams



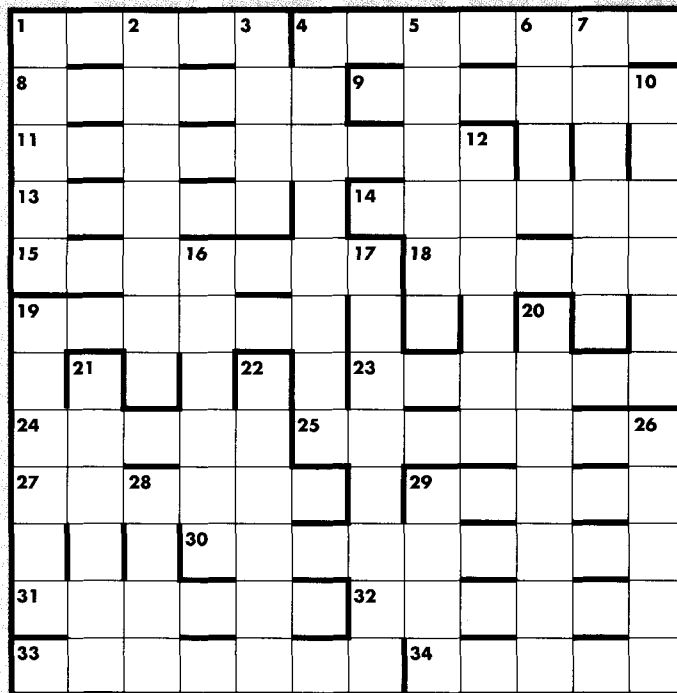
THE PUZZLER

by Emily Cox and Henry Rathvon

Treasure Map

This month's diagram is an authentic map drawn by the puzzling pirate Captain Stump. It delineates the island on which he has hidden a treasure. Directions leading to the treasure may be found within the grid; just follow the directional markers. When you have located the treasure, which is also in the grid, write what it is on a post-card and mail the card to "Treasure Map," The Atlantic Monthly, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, MA 02114. You may win a gift certificate worth \$150 from Zingerman's, a gourmet-food mail-order house in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Clue answers include eight capitalized words.

See facing page for contest details and for the solution to last month's Puzzler.



Across

1. Pirate's treasure initially buried in ocean islet's center (5)
4. Material for a set of pipes dry on the outside (7)
8. Group excluding Liberal, in general (6)
9. John Doe, ruined, was carried down the river a certain way (6)
11. Assessors for IRS appear confused about last of forms (10)
13. You might hear people you can't trust with strings (5)
14. Shrinks from foremost of hospitals absorbed by a seeker of the Grail (6)
15. Hype one kid's pens (7)
18. "Big Red" baseball team left heading west (5)
19. Hip comic success (4-2)
23. Queen beheaded vendor next to yard (6)
24. NASA rocket kept in secret room (5)
25. Bug-eating plants flower in the possession of Doctor Angstrom (7)
27. Supporters of art exam simpler than any other (7)
29. Small explosive in operation makes one chicken (5)
30. Chuck takes train halfway for education (9)
31. Senator is penning "R-Month" speech (6)
32. Monkey primarily eats fruit with a peel (6)
33. Psychic part filled by Reagan very early in movie with Meryl Streep (8)
34. Queen almost set back country in Africa (5)

Down

1. Rob nearly completed octave on piano (5)
2. Earl spars with lively wits (7)
3. Cut short smallest fields (4)
4. Detective Wolfe comes up with island located on a map? (8)
5. Mix up last of mortar used in triangular wall (6)
6. Something you can't do by repeatedly rising (2-2)
7. *Mister Ed* makes a comeback with the debut of *Barney Rubble* (6)
10. Animating figure wants card back (6)
12. German police seizing the underworld's bombs (6)
16. Quiet Olympian splits (6)
17. Forest building houses leader of Roman court (8)
19. In battles, nurse Nightingale finally alerting people? (7)
20. Indiscriminate rat has shed tears (8)
21. Move carefully right after the last letter from Margot Kidder (6)
22. A man's name came up outside of company (6)
26. Topless item in a clothes closet evokes heated emotion (5)
28. One beginning essential to Marty Robbins (4)
29. "Sting" eats red veggie (4)

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving, send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, Mass. 02114.

WORD WATCH

by Anne H. Soukhanov

crind *noun*, an automatic credit-card reader, as at a gasoline pump or other point of purchase: "I drive out of my way to find a station with *crinds*. . . . I can now rent a car, buy an airline ticket, even check in and out of a hotel with no human contact" (Damon Darlin, *Forbes*).

BACKGROUND: Also styled *CRIND*, this term (pronounced to rhyme with "pinned") began as an acronym for "card reader in dispenser," a device that was tested as early as 1989 by at least one nationwide gasoline distributor. The popularity of *crinds* attests to the growing impersonality of today's fast-paced society, in which such things as convenience, speed, and predictability in transactions have become top priorities.

guerrilla librarianship *noun*, the use of surreptitious measures by librarians determined to resist the large-scale "deaccessioning" of rarely used books: "A branch librarian . . . sometimes goes around with a due-date stamp, furtively stamping into currency books that she feels are imperiled. . . . [Employees of the San Francisco Public Library] call it 'guerrilla librarianship'" (*The New Yorker*).

BACKGROUND: *Guerrilla librarianship* can also involve such tactics as transferring endangered books from one department to another and hiding books in lockers, to be reintroduced to the collection "when the danger has passed," as *The New Yorker* puts it. The term has so far generally been restricted to the controversy over the *purge*, or *weeding*, of *deselected* books in the new San Francisco Public Library (thousands of tomes have been relegated to landfills; thousands of others, however, are said to have been quietly saved through the methods described

A selection of terms that have newly been coined, that have recently acquired new currency, or that have taken on new meanings, compiled by the executive editor of The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition.

above). It may, however, gain wider currency if new libraries elsewhere are designed, as the San Francisco facility was, with generous space for computer terminals, meeting rooms, and art, but inadequate space for books.

medical mall *noun*, a complex of facilities that offers diagnostic services, primary patient care, outpatient surgery, and psychotherapy together under one roof, along with such amenities as banks, restaurants, and dry cleaners: "Can chest X-rays and cholesterol tests be sold like polo shirts and lingerie? The developers of *medical malls* think. . . . they can attract patients and managed-care contracts with one-stop shopping for medical services" (*Wall Street Journal*).

BACKGROUND: *Medical malls* are a giant leap beyond the *urgicenter* (or *doc-in-a-box* or *McDoctor*)—a for-profit medical clinic in a business district or mall (discussed in this space in 1987). Like *urgicenters*, *medical malls* may proliferate: the concept appears to be catching on even with traditional hospitals, some of which have opened vast *medical malls* nearby. By the end of 1995 *medical malls* were operating in several states, including California, Missouri, Maryland, and Florida.

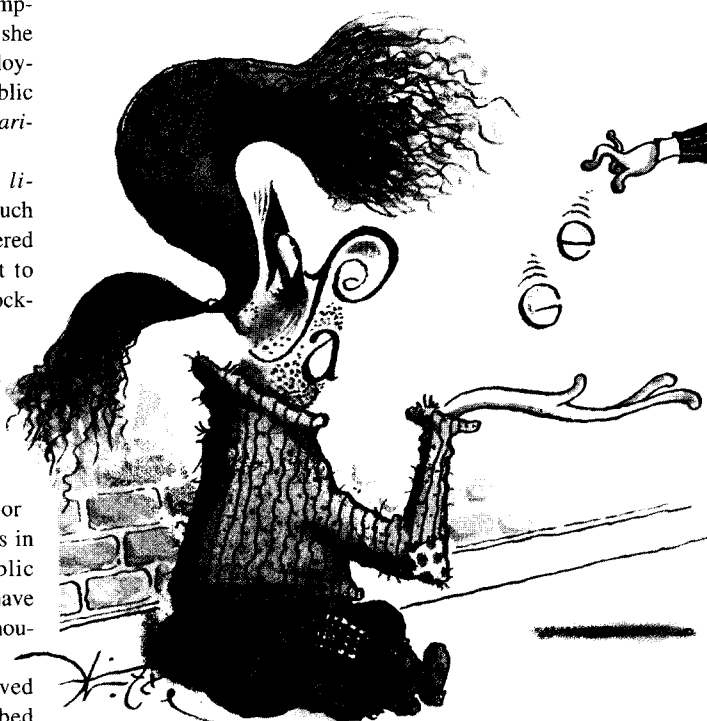
spange *verb, slang*, to panhandle for spare change: "'I don't *spange* much because I really don't like doing it. I eat out of trash cans a lot. Pizza. Hamburgers. Fries. Soda. . . . It's survival of the fittest. Those that aren't fit

have to go home'" (young male living on the streets, quoted in *The New York Times Magazine*).

BACKGROUND: *Spange* is a slurred shorthand form—an oral acronym, as it were—of the question "Spare any change?" Like the expression *traveler*, used for a young drifter who rides the rails or hitchhikes from city to city, it comes from the argot of today's *street punks*. Some of those, ironically, are *trustafarians*—rich or upper-middle-class youths living on the streets by choice. The term *trustafarian*, a blend of *trust fund* and *Rastafarian*, dates back to at least 1992 in British sources and reflects the dreadlocks hairstyles and neo-hippie, unkempt clothing affected by some of these youths.

sylvanshine *noun*, a bright white light that seems to emanate from certain kinds of dew-covered trees when a beam of light, as from a vehicle's headlights, strikes them: "Ever driven through a wooded area on a summer night and thought you saw snow-covered trees in the moonlight? You can 'fess up; you're not crazy. You simply saw *sylvanshine*" (*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*).

BACKGROUND: This phenomenon was named and explained by the Pennsylvania State University meteorologist Alistair B. Fraser in 1994, a decade after he first noticed it. *Sylvanshine* is a form of *retroreflection*—the visual effect that makes highway markers, bicycle reflectors, and cats' eyes seem to shine in the dark. Blue spruce, arborvitae, rhododendron, hemlock, and juniper are all conducive to *sylvanshine*. Their leaves or needles are coated with wax, on which dewdrops bead; the drops become, in effect, lenses that concentrate and channel much of the light back toward its source rather than scattering it in other directions.



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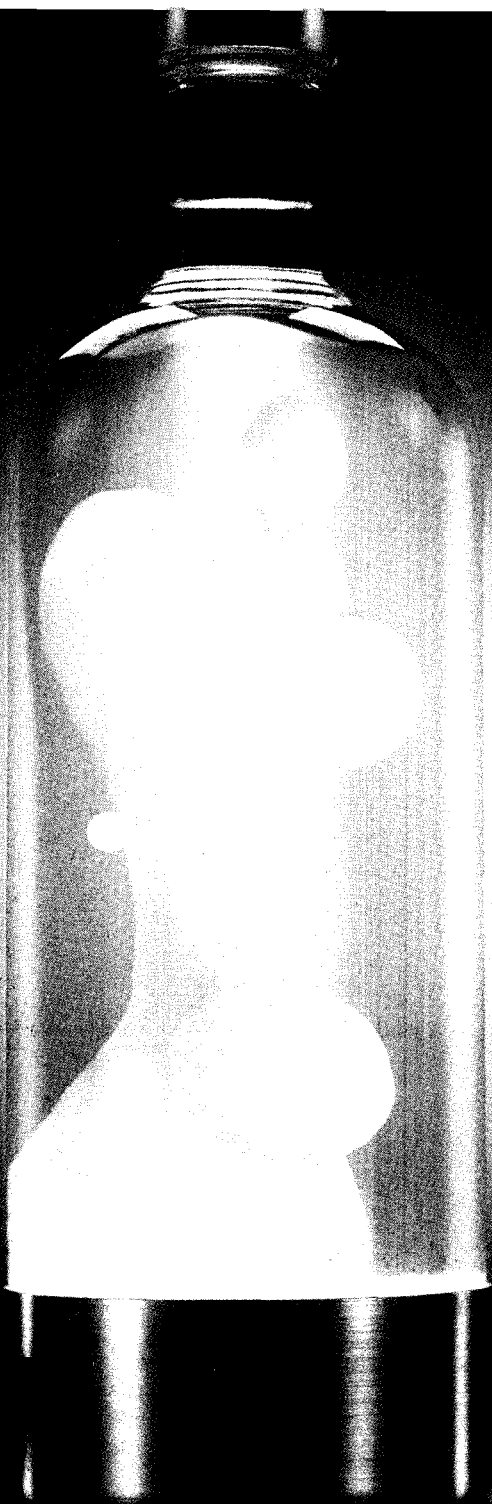


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